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## Introductory Note

Last year *Interlitteraria* celebrated its first significant anniversary, as its fifth issue, gathering the papers of the third International Conference of the EACL, "Culture and Nation at the Turn of the Millennium", was published and presented in June, 2000, at Tartu University, *Interlitteraria* headquarters and shelter.

We believe our "pentateuch" has definitely established the principles voiced in the Editor's words at the launching of *Interlitteraria*'s first issue in 1996: "We would like to mediate literary-philosophical thought between the East and the West, and the North and the South; would like to become a vehicle by which Estonian literary thought — and why not Estonian literature — reaches the outside world, and by which the outside world (re)animates Estonian intellectual and creative life."

Indeed, over the past years we have managed to publish 112 articles by scholars from 27 countries of the entire world. A permanent network of faithful contributors has formed, while gradually new voices have been attracted. In the present issue we are glad to introduce, for the first time, African literary research — thus all five continents have by now been engaged in the dialogue and discussion offered by *Interlitteraria* international forum. The African debut in *Interlitteraria*, naturally, is a direct offshoot of the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the ICLA, "Transitions and Transgressions in an Age of Multiculturalism" (August, 2000) in Pretoria, the Republic of South Africa, in which the Editor of *Interlitteraria*, as well as one of its board members, thanks to the kind help of the Estonian Science Foundation and the Estonian Cultural Endowment, could take part.

Along with these successes, the first five years have also witnessed irreparable losses. On June 27, 2000, a dear friend and an excellent colleague, Professor Emeritus of Salzburg University Felix Karlinger (b. 1920) died. He was one of Europe's greatest connoisseurs of folk literature and the folklore of the Romance peoples. Because of the political restrictions imposed by the former Soviet regime, I could never meet him personally, but our correspondence and

cordial friendship by letters extended over several decades, resulting in a number of fertile creative impulses. *Interlitteraria* could pay its tribute to Felix Karlinger by publishing his article "Fragmente zum Grotesken in der italienischen Literatur des Seicento" in its second issue (2, 1997), "The Language of the Grotesque".

The present *miscellanea*-issue of *Interlitteraria* should provide continuation for several topics initiated in our previous numbers. The Spanish philosopher Rosa María Rodríguez Magda provides in her inaugural essay a critical insight into the present state of the Western philosophical and cultural discourse. She advocates a new "transmodern" discourse, capable of reanimating and consolidating the synergy hidden under the ever thicker layers of the intellectual commodity of our days. Direct influences of the turn-of the-millennium globalization on one of the greatest cultural spaces of the East, China, are being thoroughly described in the article by Li Xia, who in the previous issues of *Interlitteraria* has comprehensively illuminated the present state of Chinese poetry, as well as given a penetrating overview of the multicultural approaches in postmodern comparative literary and cultural studies.

An exemplary comparative "global tour" through the trans-cultural literature is effectuated in the article of Madina Tlostanova, from Moscow. Though she rightly claims that the literature of the ex and post Soviet Union has remained a kind of a "post-colonial" virgin land, virtually untouched by the leading theorists of post-colonial studies, we might still indicate that her suggestion has had a tentative precedent in *Interlitteraria* 5, 2000, where the American-Estonian Tiina Kirss, while analyzing the fiction of the Estonian writer Ene Mihkelson, has focused on the same.

While the "liminal hybridity", following H. K. Bhabha's theorizing, has become one of the key-terms in treating a vast area of colonial and post-colonial literature (see also the article by the South African Priya Narismulu), we should also listen to other voices, not so much rooted in the discourses of the Western cultural "centres" than in the existential and ethno-biological processes which often contradict the "logic of the civilizing progress". Therefore we welcome a continuing discussion on the lines of the "national" and the "trans-national" in the light of the postmodern globalizing processes — the main theme of *Interlitteraria* 5,



2000 — and thank Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah, Josep Carles Laínez and Najib Redouane for contributing to it.

The present state of world poetry, about which a monographic study was provided by *Interlitteraria* 4, 1999 (by now, unfortunately, sold out), is closely linked with the same contradicting cultural dilemma, with the difference that very few leading postmodern theorists have paid attention to the poetic matter. A rare example in this sense, half a century ago, was offered by Gaston Bachelard, whose poetic philosophy has been comprehensively resumed in Alfredo Saldaña's article. Bachelard seems to be one of the few Western theorists of the 1950s who has survived the postmodern counter-current. His *La poétique de l'espace*, by the way, has just been translated into Estonian.

Thus, although poetry so reluctantly yields to logical tentacles, the quest of its essence may still have some value. In this *Interlitteraria* the American poet H. L. Hix, recent winner of the T. S. Eliot Prize, discusses some of poetry's "formal" fundamentals, while Ene-Reet Soovik and myself continue to elucidate facets of Estonian (post)modern poetry. Likewise in the poetic area, though more definitely in the vein of a formal analysis, Maria Lotman, the granddaughter of Yuri M. Lotman, treats the issue of rhythmic structures in classical Greek comedy.

The continuous forefront issue of female sensitivity and its part in the historical culture, touched upon in the articles by Anna Botta and Raili Põldsaar in *Interlitteraria* 5, are in the present *miscellanea*-number dealt with by Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, as she compares the diaries of Virginia Woolf to those of the Finnish-Estonian writer Aino Kallas, as well as by Vassiliki Lalagianni, from Greece, and by Mosé Chimoun, from Cameroon. The latter's article should convincingly prove that African woman writers take an ever more active part in the re-vindication of female creativity around the entire world.

Important contributions to the research of the novel are made by Georges Fréris and Biagio D'Angelo. The former expands on the theme of the war fiction, which he himself introduced in *Interlitteraria* 3, while the latter sheds light on Gogol's historical novel in the Bakhtinian manner, thus, coming close to the issues dealt with in *Interlitteraria* 2 ("The language of the Grotesque").

Along with the expansion of a number of themes treated in the previous issues of *Interlitteraria*, essential new topics appear in the present *miscellanea*-number. Peeter Torop, the current Head of the Department of Semiotics at Tartu University, and one of the closest disciples of Yuri Lotman, presents his view on the state of the semiotics of translation, while Thomas Salumets, Liina Lukas and Mari Tarvas bring in the wider research area of Estonian literary and cultural relationships with German-speaking countries. This, naturally, includes the by now historical phenomenon of Baltic-German culture, the complicated discovery of the "Baltic Other" by the German Romantics, like the "Sturm und Drang" key figure Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, as well as the historically oscillating trajectory of the reception of the literature of the German-speaking area in Estonia.

Last but not least, The Portuguese Maria Teresa de Fonseca Fragata Correia demonstrates in her emotional essay the impossibility of being, as the painful obsession in three of the greatest European writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including her compatriot Fernando Pessoa. Though, by their honesty of admitting the very fact of being's impossibility in their work, we might still add, they turned the impossibility into a possibility, for many. It is unlikely that the vivid traces of the work of Pessoa, Kafka and Beckett, which in the form of translations have reached Estonia from the 1960s, could be erased from Estonian culture in this new century.

As for *Interlitteraria*'s immediate perspectives, the next issue (7, 2002) will gather mainly the papers of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the EACL, "World Drama on the Threshold of the XXI Century: Tradition and Avant-garde", to be held in Tartu in September, 2001. The MSS should arrive by January 15, 2002. After that, we will be thinking about another *miscellanea*-issue, to which all our old and new contributors will be welcome.

Meanwhile, *Interlitteraria* has been receiving, sometimes as an exchange, sometimes as a gift, books and articles from different parts of the world. Although we hardly can hope to be capable of reviewing them, we will be including, starting from the present number, a list of the received publications, making at the same time an effort to delineate their principal content.

Jüri Talvet,  
Editor



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## Transmodernity, Neotribalism and Postpolitics

ROSA MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ MAGDA

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The crisis of Modernity, the end of the struggle between the great Theories, is thrusting us out into an epistemological vacuum, a lack of legitimation. Perhaps the worst corollary of post-modern currents has been the plunge into nihilism, relativism, banalisation, into "anything goes" eclecticism. History may well go on with no need for our criticism and digressions, but I should not like to think that philosophy is the sort of almost dispensable deliberation for social pragmatics as Rorty would have us believe.

The philosophical problem par excellence today consists in finding out if it is possible to keep the epistemological rules of social space (definition of agents and change), of knowledge (interpretation and transformation of reality), ethics (endurance of values and the moral dimension) and of aesthetics (criteria) without resorting to a strong foundation. What are the minimum necessary and sufficient possibility conditions for such realms to work? How much truth, subject, reality, freedom, autonomy, justice is essential to guarantee social and personal welfare and the use of reason? What foundation is required by this *philosophy of survival*?

We might well be able to accept pragmatism, contextualism, relativism, expediency as horizons of the end of the century, as is put forward by the *pensiero debole*, but this is in any event a critical and epistemological option, not the alibi for a desertion of ethics and reason, and has nothing to do with moral prevarication, rootless cynicism, shortsightedness, or the obsequious prostration before interests and circumstances. This is not the self-satisfied and limited smile of the last man, as Nietzsche put it. The lack of

*Grund*, the failure of the Great Theory does not need to lead us to short flights into fragmentary nonsense. The certainty that we can hardly reach what is beautiful, and that the lofty heights of the sublime escape us (both in the Kantian sense) should make us overcome this dichotomy in an apotheosis of ingenuity and exigency. It should make us uninterruptedly sublime, as Baudelaire put it, wrenching from a frail appearance the majesty that thrusts its roots down into the lucid perception of the shortcoming. Since we are not determined by ontoteleology, positivism nor natural law our metaphysical freedom is infinite. From nihilism and the hammer philosophy the Great Politics emerged, and today we do not want the victorious hosts of the superman, but the aesthetic commitment of the art of flight, a well tempered clavier to construct a neo-baroque splendour. Life must be turned into a Brandenburg Concerto or we will die uncouth and mundane. The Goldberg variations are our noumenal challenge, our bid for disperse infinity. The fall of the Great Versions does not make the requirement for creative elevation any less important, only the slavery of the conditioners does. Dispensability, contingency are turned into unrestricted mainstays of creation. If God, Nature or History exist with their own precise rules, I can only recognise them, praise them and obey them — security in exchange for certainty. If they turn out to be further examples of regulatory simulations, our solitude as orphans can then guarantee our free creation.

The possibility conditions of moral action, social balance or autonomy are not something that we have to investigate *a priori*. After the dogmatic dreams of reason, Copernican rotation is something that has existed for some time. The world does in fact run quite smoothly without the enraptured or apocalyptic sermons of philosophers, so the question is as always to see what are the *a posteriori* conditions vouched for by the facts. The question does not consist in finding out if morals, justice, happiness, knowledge are possible (a recurrent topic now supposedly refurbished with *fin de siècle* trappings) but in showing how an approximate and unstable equilibrium can actually be maintained in these spheres, and in determining the absence of which conditions makes this impossible. The criterion involved is thus experience, trial and error, the principle of calculated guesswork applied to social

perfectibility: certain circumstances guarantee *de factum* a certain effect, which remains positive until a better one is found.

This is an empirically conservative pact with reality and one theoretically open to the greatest innovative intellectual freedom. From experience stem regulatory ideals which do not go back to an always sought after and slippery noumenal foundation, but rather to a permanently renewed consensus. Operative simulacrum are practically validated. Action is determined by praxis, not by an ideal basis, but no action can fail to generate ontology, identity, reference, recognition. The action and not the essence is what produces the strategic and minimum subject that we need to think, to feel and to call ourselves "I". The step from that longed for and fictitious order of the "*factum*" to the reviled one of "*fictum*" is paradoxically the only way back for configuring reality. Every act, every affirmation submerges us in an ancient reverberation of subterranean discourses, and makes our back teem with shadows, connecting us, in Quine's words, with diverse "ontological commitments". Ours must be the sagacity and the responsibility to clear away such surviving citadels from language, to wash away ancient echoes from voices, and after becoming as far as possible the owners of our syntax, give back their nature of simulation to the ghosts, and use them as such to build the projects we refuse to give up, the ones whose collapse was handed down to us by Modernity: freedom, independence, justice, knowledge, which cross the scorched post-modern land in their "transmodern" fashion.

"Trans" is the prefix with which we reject both unitary nostalgias and the eclectic deception of oblivion, the moral bid for recapping the challenges pending, without resorting to the Great Theories, the comfort of a positively empirical reality or the certainty of the scientific minor gods of laicism. We assume secularisation with the artist's sublime boldness.

Truth is just another of the systems of fiction, the one that looks most operative at that particular time, but this does not mean we should slaughter the "fictive" creation of other possibilities.

We reject the hard model of complacent modernity. But relativism cannot be the alibi of moral cynicism and short-sightedness; it must instead be a door open to intellectual creation, with ethics as a free independent choice not universally normative and reason



as an aesthetic stylization of the ego. Since God does not create us, natural law does not bind us and reality does not crush us positively, the subject is left alone before the immense task of creating.

This could vitally be seen as a question of peaks or planes. One must metaphysically assume the fall of metaphysics. Bach's ethereal verticality had offered us a metaphorical model, and present day science also makes a bid for paradigms that lie increasingly distant from mechanistic and positive sensibility: the principle of indeterminacy, quantum theory, hyperspace, parallel universes, fractals, black holes, the new science of obscure logic (Bart Kosko). The same thing should occur with thought.

*How can one defend the obvious nature of pragmatism without falling into its complacent and blunt short-sightedness?*

It is this sort of creative pragmatism that should pick up and take on the future of Theory in epistemology, in ethics, in sociology, in politics without any false bad conscience and with all the daring of the artist philosopher.

This pragmatism would for example be diametrically opposed to Rorty when, interpreting Rawls, he defends the priority of democracy over philosophy (Vattimo 1994: 316).

Rorty quotes, amongst others, a paragraph by Rawls from *Justicia como equidad y otros ensayos* (Rawls 1986) which is reproduced here for the interest it may have:

Since justice inasmuch as it means equity is taken to be a political conception of justice applied to a democratic society, it tries not to invoke philosophical or political affirmations of any kind, as far as possible. More than all else, it attempts to base itself only on certain fundamental intuitive ideas, which lie in the political institutions of a democratic society and in the public interpretative tradition of these ideas. We thus hope that this practical conception of justice is sustained at least by what we could term a "super-imposed consensus", which is to say all the opposing philosophical doctrines that are presumed to be able to live and find followers in a reasonably fair and well ordered democratic society. (Rorty 1990).

For Rorty this standpoint manifests the inappropriateness of seeking an independent moral order, it being better to restrict ourselves in matters of social justice to the clearest suggestions from common sense and tradition. This separation of philosophy and political praxis could be compared with the process undergone by religion, which was gradually separated from the State and interned in the sphere of conscience, for the sake of religious freedom. In Rorty's way of thinking, Rawls' proposals would similarly lead us through a second secularization process — philosophical this time — to separating the questions referring to man's nature and purpose from politics, arguments about the meaning of human life thus being reserved for the private sphere. In the same way as religion, inasmuch as this is theology, started as the most elevated foundation and legitimation of human knowledge and action and ended as an option for personal worship, philosophy should abandon, not the investigation into first causes and first principles, but any rational public, enlightened or critical prominence, to be shut away in the private realm of opinion.

Considering philosophical analysis as being irrelevant for fair social administration and belonging only to the freedom of private opinion does not seem to me a desirable prospect in the least. Criticism of the metaphysical-epistemological foundations cannot reduce the *logos* to *doxa*, and bring public debate down to the irrelevancy of private and personal option. The opposite of the great Unitarian theories is multiplicity, not casting them into oblivion, because from multiplicity stems the power of controversy, of criticism, of public — if not universal — use of reason, and the need for consensus as a revisable form of the democratic experimentation of freedom. The fulfilment of freethinking is not irrelevancy, but the free argumentative circulation guaranteeing the reversibility of positions and the principle of accumulating power.

Transmodernity, as an open stage and designation for our present situation, attempts, far more than being a random denomination, to reveal in its very concept the open challenges of Modernity inherited after the downfall of the Enlightenment project. Not relinquishing today Theory, History, Social Justice and the independence of the Subject, assuming postmodern criticism, implies marking out a possible horizon for reflection that evades nihilism,



without committing itself to outmoded projects but without forgetting them either. Accepting pragmatism as a basis does not mean denying that human action is guided by regulatory ideals which found argumentative rationality even though such regulatory ideals, which with modernity refused to be based on theology or metaphysics, cannot become legitimate in the enlightened project either today, after postmodern criticism. We may have weakened their epistemological forcefulness, but not under any circumstances the logical and social need for them, which is where the notion of pragmatism comes in.

Such regulatory ideas represent operative simulations legitimated in the teleology of rational perfectibility, that criticism and consensus incessantly renew, not universal but universalisable values of a public nature, which find their field not in intuition, in common sense or in tradition, but in the theoretical endeavour to create conceptual paradigms which enable greater social and individual welfare. We are thus talking of social transformation, of going beyond mere practical management, of argumentative transactions, of lines of questioning which intersect rational investigation transforming this and themselves at the same time. Transvanguardism, transpolitical, transexuality... concepts which attempt to reflect the dynamic heterogeneity of change, set not in the ancient stones of metaphysics but in the positive and autonomous bid of necessary simulacrum. The transmodern option is as distant from foundation-coveting nostalgias as it is from the claims for a theory-shunning common sense. Neither do operative simulacrum have the legitimation of a supposed ideal community of language; what they do have is the located exercising of diverse argumentative positions, which create approximate agreements on strategic hypotheses. As an example we could put forward that, for the international defence of human rights, we do not require a theological basis, nor one based on natural law, nor on the enlightened universality of reason; what we need is the legitimacy given us by the strategic proposal for defending what we have up to now considered necessary conditions to guarantee the greatest good for the greatest number of people in a utilitarian sense, in a fight for survival against fundamentalisms which accuse us of

cultural imperialism and hide behind their national or religious sectarianism.

As was so perceptively shown by Lyotard, the question of authority marks the difference between Western democratic positions and fundamentalisms, especially those in the Islamic tradition. The latter seek legitimization of authority in tradition, in the national identity, the concept of race, of religious faith, powerful concepts with a deep emotional content: the law, The Word of God or the Blood consolidate the community's identity in their monolithic and bellicose manner. On the other hand in modern or post-modern societies, authority is not a pre-established clear and irremovable sphere, occupied from the legitimacy of a necessary and inescapable Truth, whether this is *Volkgeist* or divine revelation, a *plenum* that is expressed or interpreted. It is instead a *vacant space* which is temporarily occupied by a delegated person or a group, chosen through an electoral contract by the people and whose action is subject to review and criticism. The lack, the void, the metaphysical absence of foundations thus becomes not a loss for contemporary societies, but precisely the necessary condition to guarantee democratic freedom. The fact that authority refers to the void does not represent the weakness of the Theory, but the guarantee of the argumentative use of reason in the political sphere, the necessary pragmatic space from which the individual's independence is built and renewed.

Empty, blank space is not a theoretical shortcoming but a guarantee of freedom, of criticism, of the reversibility of power, of argumentative practice. I would call this "fiction" the consummation and passage from the *factum* to the *fictum*; to be seen as the birth of a narrative philosophy which reverses Kierkegaard's gradation, abandons theological strata, and goes on into ethics, attempting to find an aesthetic pleasure in the morality of moralities.

It will be fiction that returns us to reality and what constructs the conceptual decoration and support structure, which generates reality by enabling action. There is no justification for these fictions to take on the rough industrial aspect of Wittgenstein's ladder, which we used after fulfilling its purpose. Why not Bach's ethereal baroque? We have gone from positivism to virtuality in

every way: telematics, scientific paradigms, the political scene, television-orientated intellectual activity, hypertext as creation. All talk to us of excess, and vouch for the realization of the "society of spectacle" that Debord announced. The task involved is to separate the reverberation of banality and duplicity, to assume levity as an ethical, epistemological and aesthetic challenge. We die for ghosts and live thanks to them as well, but there is a critical line which distinguishes the swindle of fraud from a rigorous metaphysics of the ethereal which knows how to use the simulation and fiction as vehicles of the most elevated exigency.

This dynamic of vacuum and excess, the paradoxical basis of deficiency and inflation, is what we find at the same time in such disparate fields as collapsing economies, the coexistence of North-South imbalances or the entertainment culture along with intellectual inanity. But we should draw from this very situation the mechanisms to save us from the nostalgia for foundation, the nihilism of the void or the excess of banality. This does not mean rebuilding lost or longed-for worlds, but neither does it mean succumbing to the futile in the very least. The transmodern direction of this situation, grasped as a description of our present by most thinkers, does not propose some nostalgic return to the MacIntyre style neo-communitarianism, or an extension of Modernity with basically neo-enlightened criteria (Habermas), but under no circumstances does it simply accept Baudrillard's nihilism or the superficial pastiche of post-modern tribes. The vacuum, the simulacrum, blank space does not legitimate either melancholy or a lack of criteria, and the proliferation of signs does not perpetrate the murder of Theory. The "coming of age" consists precisely in assuming the void without giving up even one of the objectives of autonomy.

This geography of absence can also be appreciated in the sociological and ethical fields — the crisis of politics, the substitution of ideology for management, social scepticism. If the 1980s saw the apotheosis of the postmodern "look", the celebration of the fragment, the culture of entertainment, the exaltation of narcissism, a spree of banality, the 1990s have let us see the more barbaric, brutal side of this fragmentation. After the celebration of the fall of the Berlin wall, there has been political disintegration,



resurgence of nationalist conflicts, the war in what used to be Yugoslavia, the capitalist fallacy of the end of history as sung by Fukuyama, clinching the death of Marxism, political corruption making the system of democratic representation totter, fundamentalist extremism, ethnic cleansing, mass murder in Algeria or Chiapas.

Faced with this critical attitude to the theoretical and political ideals which sustained our modernity, society seems to get two apparently opposed response strategies under way, one a group tactic and the other an individualist one. On one hand, marginal local groups who do not consider themselves to be represented by the system, whether these be unemployed, gangs of youths, radical groups, immigrant districts... or whole national collectives, develop neo-tribal processes of emotional cohesion. On the other, the middle class integrated sectors display orderly pragmatic-liberal attitudes assuming the ideological void. Both these areas can produce fundamentalist or ultra-conservative discourses, in the first case contradicting the mainly non-discursive aspect of the emotional tribal bond, and in the second seeking puritan and ultra-conservative revivals to counter social tolerance, creating transversal links which, in their emotional logical resources, make such diverse groups as the Islamic fundamentalisms or the puritan proposals of the Republican party in the U.S.A. ultimately similar.

The transmodern age is imbued with the authority of absence. Wherever we look we find this basic void. It is felt as a indispensable deficiency at the base of all fundamentalisms, nostalgia for the Whole and the Foundation, something observed in both the refined and critical position of neo-enlightened stances, and in the most neoconservative reactions, religious fanaticism, or the emotional need for cohesion in the diverse urban tribes. But there is also an assumption of the deficiency as a pragmatic and liberal return of the postmoralist responsibility.

The new social space built should protect the emancipating endeavour which has been handed down to us, establish a profound revision of the model of political representation, integrate the emotional forms of sociality, avoid the violent or sectarian separation of those who only find their affirmation and recognition in neotribal aggressiveness, assume the limits of tolerance

and intolerance, open itself to difference and diversity, elude selfish private narcissism, see the weapon for social regeneration in dialogue ... All of these can be seen to remain challenges pending for a modernity that is not unfinished, but perhaps fulfilled, and for this very reason an obstacle for precisely what it intended. Not only was the enlightenment insufficient, but imagination was too, as there was no noumenal reality behind the phenomenon, no beach under the paving, only a void, an absence, the liberty to give ourselves the freely chosen autonomy of fiction, guided by will and the most elevated exigency, that of Duty, not as obedience to the Law but as a sovereign exercising of one's own responsible freedom, forcing horizons, generating reality, a meeting of shadows which traces new routes to leave behind the remains of the shipwreck once and for all.

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## Metropolis in Twilight:<sup>1</sup> Urban Consciousness in Contemporary Chinese Literature

LI XIA

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The world has changed faster in the past fifty years than ever before and the emblematic landmark of this process is the modern metropolis. While the pace and intensity of change has varied significantly, no continent or culture has been left untouched by it. Big cities as an embodiment of a new reality have already attracted the interest and concern of great writers at the turn of the century, as reflected in Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and T. S. Eliot's bleak poetic vision of London in *The Waste Land* (1922)<sup>2</sup> or more recently in Salman

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<sup>1</sup> This is an allusion to Mao Dun's original intention to name his novel *Xiyang* (Twilight) to signal the impending decline of feudal and capitalist China (represented by the Old Mr. Wu). He changed it to *Ziye* (Midnight) which points to dawn and the beginning of a new day (i.e. hope). For details see M. Galik 1986: 86–87; Zhang 1996: 134–143 and 305 (footnote 71). Mao Dun's twilight-vision is replaced in the final scene of Wang Shuo's *No Man's Land* by an apocalyptic vision of global destruction (Wang, *No Man's Land*, no. 6, 1989, p. 43). Although Wang Shuo is generally dismissed as a *liumang* writer, his black vision reflects the pessimistic stance shared by many serious mainstream artists in China (and in the West).

<sup>2</sup> In his famous poem *The Waste Land* (1923), T. S. Eliot conjures up urban reality predominantly by means of brief scenes, many of them scenes of “free-floating, disembodied voices” which highlight a radical

Rushdie's Bombay in *Midnight's Children* (1983),<sup>3</sup> to name only a few. Fritz Lang's classic silent film fantasy *Metropolis* (1926) with its haunting images of a futuristic city and its mechanised society is another early artistic expression of apprehension and

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discontextualisation of the individual from causality, consequences and antecedents. However, poetic intensity and symbolic depth imbues them with an eerie presence and vitality. In the years after Eliot's poem, Dos Passos wrote in *Manhattan Transfer*, one of the major novels of the twenties about New York experience, a novel of almost 150 brief, glimps-like scenes, most of them no more than two pages long. "These scenes capture the city by means of two techniques: first, overheard voices, colloquial, slangy, tough, urban voices; second, by means of a crude phenomenological description practice that eliminated analysis or background so as to make the whole scene occur on the same plane. Dos Passos's novel is a heard, radiolike drama." (Fisher 1994: 349) Some ten years later Nathanael West used in *Miss Lonelyheart* a similar narrative technique by means of letter-samples which allow urban sufferers to express in a simple, unliterary voice the sum total of their suffering into a void from which no help or comfort can ever be expected." Eliot, Dos Passos and West each developed in a special way a fictional technique of urban oral history, a life story in words. However, it was Theodor Dreiser who produced the first freestanding collection of what we today think of as urban history. In his last great book *A Gallery of Women* Dreiser converts this project of the self into a series of Bohemian life stories which turned New York (Greenwich Village) into a mytho-poetic location in world literature and prepared, together with Dos Passos, the artistic foundation for the works of Henry Miller, Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, J. D. Salinger, and Joseph Heller." (Fisher 1994: 351).

<sup>3</sup> Salman Rushdie combines in his fiction (particularly in his portrayal of Bombay in his novel *Midnight's Children*) the non-realist European tradition of fiction (from Rabelais, Cervantes, Sterne, Gogol to Joyce) as well as the Indian tradition of story telling and allegory into a uniquely personal kind of magic realism which mirrors the city (his birthplace Bombay) and its complex identity as a mysterious and enigmatic labyrinth haunted by powerful spirits of deep-seated division, deprivation, rivalry, distrust, prejudice and submission to power.

existential angst associated with the rapid development of urban life and civilisation early this century.<sup>4</sup>

Each work referred to above is exemplary insofar as the artistic exploration of the modern metropolis as a new (and inherently destructive) dimension of human experience (or “state of mind”) is thematically and structurally foregrounded and new strategies of its artistic representation and exploration are generated. Rilke’s vision of the Paris he visited in 1902 is one of alienation and death despite the city’s apparent vitality and drive to life, which he attributes to the loss of the natural rhythm of living, and the associated drive for instant gratification:

Is this drive to live — life? No, — life is something quiet, broad, simple. The drive to live is hurry and pursuit. Drive to have life, at once, whole, in one hour. Of that Paris is so full and therefore so near to death. It is an alien, alien city. (Rilke 1945: 47f.)

Rilke’s diagnostic emphasis on alienation (loss of soul) in his perception of urban culture is exemplary and as valid today as it was at the turn of the century.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps even more valid, as the destruction of man’s natural habitat and affinity to nature (physical and emotional) is ruthlessly executed and intensified in terms of architecture (high-rise buildings and underground facilities), urban organisation and development (transport), population policies (overpopulation of the urban space) and professional and private life (mechanisation). Movies and television and mass spectator sports cannot fill the emptiness experienced by people in the wasteland of their urban lives.

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<sup>4</sup> See particularly mechanisation, underground facilities, automatisisation and China projects, sketches in Koolhaas (1995).

<sup>5</sup> See Malte’s nostalgia for the rural past (culture); a similar attitude is also reflected in Chinese fiction, i.e. the importance of the “rural world” in Chinese literature: Wang Meng’s return to his rural childhood and Zhang Yimou’s fascination with rural life — most of Fifth Generation films have a rural setting and the urban world is much less important, and as in Zhang Yimou’s case, not seen as a refuge or heaven (escape) for the rural poor (poverty). The ending of his film “Not One Less” is one such case.



The novels listed above can be defined as urban fiction or "city literature" (also referred to as "big city novels") which constitutes a literary genre of its own. In a formal sense this has been the most innovative (and experimental) type of Western fiction (and cinematography). Although Chinese writers have dealt with urban reality as represented above all by Beijing and Shanghai, no works of equivalent depth and fictional technique have been written. However, as in Western literary practice, the literary genre primarily preoccupied with urban reality in China is also the novel:

Inasmuch as literary genre is concerned, fiction receives more attention than drama and poetry, for it is in fiction that the issue of the city is first, and for the most part, problematised in modern China. (Zhang Yingjin 1996: xvii)

Zhang also rightly refers to the fact that urban reality was also explored in poetry. (Zhang Yingjin 1996: 271)

China might not have been in the forefront of these developments in the past,<sup>6</sup> but Deng Xiaoping's vision of a brave new world of Western capitalism and consumerism has already had considerable an impact on Chinese urban life,<sup>7</sup> particularly in

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<sup>6</sup> For general reference material on urban development in China see Oscar Handlin and John Burchard (1963 a), 274–275 which includes studies up to the 1960s. Of special relevance is Rhoads Murphey, *Shanghai: Key to Modern China*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1953.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of the all-important concept of *guangchang* in the context of the market-place rhetoric in literature and the media and the widening gap between the rich and the poor, see Dai Jinhua: "Invisible Writing: The Politics of Chinese Mass Culture in the 1990s" in: *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* No. 11, 1999, 31–57: "In the 1990s, popular culture is the key actor on the stage. Behind the glamorous commercial prosperity displayed in the new plaza *guangchang*s there is a far more profound, disturbing, and yet invisible division between the working class and the government. The politics of popular literature and culture legitimizes the new ideological transformation. This new process of legitimization has not yet met any real cultural or intellectual resistance.... The public stance of a critical

Shanghai, Shenzhen, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin and other cities. Significantly, Shenzhen<sup>8</sup> and above all Shanghai as beneficiaries of the Pearl and Yangtze River Delta Project, have attracted the interest of leading international architects as key locations with exemplary postmodern urban architecture and development. Alluding to Robert Musil, Rem Koolhaas refers to Shenzhen as a “generic city” or “city without qualities” (*Stadt ohne Eigen-*

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social conscience is absent in our time.” (57) It should be pointed out that present-day Chinese urban reality is more accurately depicted in popular literature and art than in serious mainstream writings.

- <sup>8</sup> Shenzhen, the first economic zone bordering Hong Kong, was established in 1980 by the Chinese Government as a window to display the vibrant socialist economy under the reform and “open door” policy. Twenty years later, the city, which used to be regarded by many people as a “cultural desert” with its sky-rocketing economy, also turned out to be an artistic oasis and a window of cultural prosperity in China, according to Dong Xiaoming, artist and art administrator of the city since 1991. The city of Shenzhen, which was built on the site of a small fishing village, now has a permanent population of 1.14 million and another 2.6 million of transient population. Most of the residents are from throughout China. Shenzhen has built many large-scale cultural facilities of national standing, including a grand theatre, a symphony orchestra, three art museums, and the Shenzhen Art Academy which serves as an artistic creation centre for professional artists. (See *China Daily*, 5 August, 2000, Ying Shi, “Arts in Shenzhen”). For the modern city as a scene of great outbursts of cultural creativity (in the West) see Oscar Handlin (1963b), 20: “Georgian London, Paris in the first decades of the Third Republic, Vienna toward the end of the reign of Franz Joseph, and Berlin of the 1920’s were the settings of great achievements of the human spirit, in literature, in art, in music, and in science. Yet these were also, and at the same time, the scenes of bitter struggles for existence, of acute hardships suffered by hundreds of thousands of ill-prepared newcomers beaten down by insoluble problems. John Gay and William Hogarth, Anatole France and Honoré Daumier, Robert Musil and Berthold Brecht, and Charlie Chaplin and René Clair compiled a record of disasters, of moral disintegration, of human costs so high it could only be contemplated under the palliative gloss of humor.” Ying Shi’s proud proclamation of Shenzhen’s artistic achievements also ignores the high human cost involved.



schaften) which he selected for a special study project by senior students of architecture at Harvard. The ultimate prototype of the "generic city",<sup>9</sup> however, is Singapore, which is more Western

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<sup>9</sup> The hallmarks of the Generic City according to Rem Koolhaas: "The Generic City is the city liberated from the captivity of center, from the straightjacket of identity. The Generic City breaks with this destructive cycle of dependency: it is nothing but a reflection of present need and present ability. It is the city without history. It is big enough for everybody. It is easy. It does not need maintenance. If it gets too small it just expands. If it gets old it just self-destructs and renews. It is equally exciting — or unexciting — everywhere. It is "superficial" — like a Hollywood studio lot, it can produce a new identity every Monday morning. [...] The Generic City has grown over the past few decades. Not only has its size increased, its numbers have too. In the early seventies it was inhabited by an average of 2.5 million official (and +/- 500.000 unofficial) residents; now it hovers around the 15 million mark. [...] a large proportion of Generic Cities are Asian — seemingly a contradiction in terms; the over-familiar inhabited by the inscrutable. One day it will be absolutely exotic again, this discarded product of Western civilization, through the resemanticisation that its very dissemination brings in its wake... [...] The Generic City is what is left after large sections of urban life crossed over to cyberspace. It is a place of weak and distended sensations, few and far between emotions, discreet and mysterious like a large space lit by a bed lamp. Compared to the classical city, the Generic City is sedated, usually perceived from a sedentary position. Instead of concentration — simultaneous presence — in the Generic City individual "moments" are spaced far apart to create a trance of almost unnoticeable aesthetic experiences: the color variations in the fluorescent lighting of an office building just before sunset, the subtleties of the slightly different whites of an illuminated sign at night. Like Japanese food, the sensations can be reconstituted and intensified in the mind, or not — they may simply be ignored. [...] This pervasive lack of urgency and insistence acts like a potent drug; it induces a *hallucination of the normal* [...] In a drastic reversal of what is supposedly the major characteristic of the city — "business" — the dominant sensation of the Generic City is an eerie calm: the calmer it is, the more it approximates the pure state. [...] The urban plane now only accommodates necessary movement, fundamentally the car; highways are a superior version of the boulevards and plazas, taking more and

than any other Asian city and in Koolhaas' words, the "victim of an out-of-control process of modernisation" and the "last polite spasm of colonialism".<sup>10</sup> But more importantly, "generic" in terms of a self-declared architectural model and "laboratory for China":

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more space. [...] The Generic City is fractal, an endless repetition of the same simple structural module; it is possible to reconstruct it from its smallest entity, a desktop computer, maybe even a diskette. [...] Like a drastic perfume demonstration, photomurals, vegetation, local costumes give a first concentrated blast of the local identity (sometimes it is also the last). Far away, comfortable, exotic, polar, regional, Eastern, rustic, new, even "undiscovered": those are the emotional registers evoked. [...] The Generic City is seriously multiracial [...] Not only multiracial, also multicultural. That's why it comes as no surprise to see temples between the slabs, dragons on the main boulevards, Buddhas in the CBD. [...] In the project "Delirious New York" (1972-76), also published as a book: *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York/London 1978, Rem Koolhaas and the OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) view the metropolis of the 20th century as the dominant area of experience in contemporary life and perceive modern man's experience of the city in terms of symbol and association, fragmentation and collage, as a giant melting-pot of mass culture and constantly self-generating anarchic-archaic systems of signs and symbols. For details and primary and secondary literature see Volker Fischer, "Rem Koolhaas" in: Muriel Emanuel Ed (1994): *Contemporary Architects. Third Edition*, New York/London (St James Press), 532-533. Also: "Life in the Metropolis or the Culture of Congestion. The Story of the Pool 1976" in: *Architectural Design* (London) May 1977.

<sup>10</sup> Oscar Handlin raises the interesting question as to why some cities fail to grow and expand as others do and why some are more successful than others in resolving their problems. With regard to Shanghai and Singapore he asks the following question: "Did Shanghai and Singapore become what they are because they were perched on the edge of Oriental societies or because they were colonial enclaves?" (Oscar Handlin a. 1963: 26) Rem Koolhaas examines this and provides an unambiguous answer. (Koolhaas 1995: 1013) One thing is also clear: Western involvement (capital) is a major factor and a driving force in China's urban development, as in the Pearl and Yangtze River Delta Projects, as highlighted in Paul Keating's account

As it stands, the Singapore model — sum, as we have seen, of a series of systematic transubstantiations which make it, in effect, one of the most ideological of all urban conditions — is now poised to metastasize across Asia. The sparkle of its organization, the glamour of its successful uprooting, the success of its human transformation, the laundering of its past, its manipulation of vernacular cultures present an irresistible model for those facing the task of imagining — and building — new urban conditions for even more countless millions. More and more, Singapore claims itself a laboratory for China, a role that could lift its present moroseness.<sup>11</sup> (Rem Koolhaas 1995: 1087)

Urbanisation Singapore-style is primarily driven by the necessity to deal with ever-growing population shifts triggered off by

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of his first meeting with Zhu Rongji, the then mayor of Shanghai, in 1988. (Paul Keating 2000: 47) See also *Metropolis*, 283.

- <sup>11</sup> In the rush for development history has been almost completely erased in Singapore (and in many big cities) in recent years. However, historical elements are often integrated as exotic ornaments and architectural pseudo-concessions to the local population and as tourist attraction (together with exotic cuisine and culture). The small part of the original Chinatown in Singapore escaped the bulldozers only by mistake. As in most big urban projects subsequently in China, a *tabula rasa* approach was used as a blueprint in Singapore. History, especially colonial history, is rehabilitated, paradoxically because it is the only one recognizable as history: the Raffles Hotel, painstakingly restored in the front, is cloned in the back to accommodate a shopping-center extension that far exceeds the original volume." (Koolhaas 1995: 1079) Also: "On the exact site that had been known in the now-laundered past for its extensive and varied sexual options — the splendor of transvestites — the state sponsored Bugis, a brand-new intersection of two "traditional" streets, framed by entirely new Chinese shophouses. One of the streets was declared "market"; the other accommodates a systematic variety of restaurants. On the upper level are clubs, one — the Boom Boom Club — discreetly anticipating the possible resurrection of the transvestite in the form of 'female' female impersonators." (Koolhaas 1995: 1015)



industrialisation and the movement of the rural population to urban areas in search of work and the hope of improved living conditions for future generations as highlighted in Sun Li and Yu Xiaohui's novel *Metropolis* [*Du Shi Feng Liu*] of 1992, winner of the Third Mao Dun Prize,<sup>12</sup> which is used here as a paradigmatic literary reference point for urban modernisation in present-day

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<sup>12</sup> See Sun Li and Yu Xiaohui, *Metropolis* [*Dushi fengliu*], Beijing (Panda Books: Chinese Literature Press) 1992 (translated by David Kwan), winner of the Third Mao Dun Prize: "The people of Pudian Street reacted to demolition and resettlement with elation. They were finally getting out of the third-rate digs they had lived in so long to move into new high-rises." (*Metropolis* 260). However, the novel also highlights widespread apprehension among the people, once the initial enthusiasm (fired up by party propaganda and government media) wears off: "The elderly worried they might not fit in with their new surroundings. The young grumbled that being away from the city centre meant adding a dozen miles or so to and from work. Those who were unable to marry due to the lack of living quarters saw the move as a sliver of hope, and leaped at the chance for expanding their living space." The "Metropolis" used by Sun Li and Yu Xiaohui as a model of urban development and the political tensions arising from it at a local level is clearly Tianjin, some four hours by car to Beijing (*Metropolis* 21f.) where rich Western merchants had moved in "after Western guns blew open the gates of China" (*Metropolis* 7); and the houses "built in the German, Japanese, Italian, French, British, American, Russian and Austrian styles" still can be seen today (*Metropolis* 8). Also, both authors, Sun Li and Yu Xiaohui studied at Tianjin Normal University. While there are unambiguous references to an existing city, the problems explored in the novel are exemplary and by no means unique and local. Also, the thematic focus of the novel is more on political-administrative aspects of large scale urban development in post-Mao China and the ideological tensions associated with it than on the impact of big city life on the individual which understandably has received less attention in Chinese urban literature than in European "big-city" novels. Also, the fact that the authors have been awarded the Mao Dun Prize (for the second time) indicates that the work complies with ideologically and artistically acceptable expectations and standards which would disqualify undue emphasis on the (negative) problems of individuals in the context of urban culture and life.

China and its impact on the society as a whole. Although the text explores at length the political, ideological and administrative aspects of the various interest groups involved (with particular emphasis on the struggle between the old party faithfuls and the proponents of change), considerable room is also given to the problems associated with the actual realisation of the Pudian Street Project which is initially welcomed by the majority of the people concerned with great enthusiasm:

The demolition of Pudian Street heralded the disappearance of the birthplace of Metropolis. In its place a modern overpass surrounded by a futuristic commercial district would soon rise. The people who lived in Pudian Street waited hopefully for orders to move. Their desire for better living conditions outstripped any sentimental attachment to the place they called home for decades or even generations. In the last few weeks the media trumpeted the importance of improving the arteries of transportation. The people of Pudian Street linked these improvements to their own standards of living. (*Metropolis* 312)

However, the bulldozing of Pudian Street (driven by foreign money and political ambition) represents more than well-intended improvement of living conditions.<sup>13</sup> It highlights the destruction of the traditional Chinese way of life, leading ultimately to alienation and a feeling of homelessness as experienced by Liu Ruofei on her return to Metropolis from life overseas<sup>14</sup> in search of her former home (childhood world):

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<sup>13</sup> "The joy of moving from a hovel to a brand new apartment was dampened by the fact that the lack of space remained unchanged. Therefore, every square inch was disputed." (*Metropolis* 312)

<sup>14</sup> "Life abroad did not disappoint her. She had a house with a lawn, a car and numerous friends. But when the novelty wore off she was lonely. Her aged uncle and aunt and the men that came and went from her life left her with an aching emptiness that she could not fill. She could not blend in to this new world." (*Metropolis* 522)

She was anxious to see that narrow lane and crowded home. But Pudian Street had disappeared, and all that was left was a wide road, and an overpass, with high-rises all around. Men and women in bright colours passed by. She had stumbled into a strange new world.<sup>15</sup> (*Metropolis* 522)

Parallel to the feeling of loss and disorientation in view of the *tabula rasa* approach of urban development (as perfected in Singapore)<sup>16</sup> in the interest of both urban and rural population,<sup>17</sup> runs as a kind of leitmotif the theme of the suppressed affinity of city dwellers to life in the countryside and their irrational captivity in Metropolis as highlighted in Jianhua's mother who hates Metropolis, but is unable to part from it:

When he was little, Jianhua remembered his mother talking about life in the countryside. She was always saying how the people were kind, the weather was good, the land was rich, and how the habits acquired in the countryside stayed with you for life. (*Metropolis* 68)

This issue is, of course, by no means new, but deeply ingrained in Chinese literature, culture and thought and, in the light of the fatal lures exerted by the cities on the rural population in present day

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<sup>15</sup> Alienation of a different kind is expressed by Chen Baozhu, the "hooligan" (*Metropolis* 32). See his reference to the Pudian Street Project: "Who wants to live there anyway? Just look at the lot that goes in and out of the place makes me sick. They are all capitalists, and overseas Chinese and the like. The higher you climb, the harder you fall. I want nothing to do with it." (*Metropolis* 34):

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>17</sup> "He told the crowd that this [i.e. Pudian Street Project] would also help in the development of the countryside. Rural and urban areas would prosper together. He stressed that the new ring road would create a favourable atmosphere to attract foreign investment as well as creating a pleasant environment in which to live. "...As long as we work hard and have a common goal, within a very short time we will find a prosperous, beautiful, clean and modern city around us..." (*Metropolis* 492)



China, more topical and relevant than ever before. No doubt, rural life has always figured more prominently in Chinese literature, past and present, than big-city life which has remained largely alien to rural China; for most of the country's leaders, above all Mao Zedong (Schram 1989: 7; Zhang 1996: 277f.), the countryside has always constituted "the centre of gravity of Chinese society" (albeit with sometimes fatal consequences such as the rustication program of the Cultural Revolution).<sup>18</sup> It has also been pointed out that, of the writers identified in recent studies on Chinese literary history as "major figures", namely Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Lao She, Ba Jin, Cao Yu, Ai Qing, Yu Dafu, Ding Ling, Dai Wangshu and Shen Congwen, only Lao She, Ba Jin and Cao Yu were born in large cities and only a few of them succeeded in producing "more memorable city narratives". (Qian *et al* 1987, Tang 1989) For Shen Congwen life in Beijing and Shanghai was nothing less than imprisonment and "exile" that is said to have triggered off "a spirit of revenge" in his urban fiction. (Zhang 1996: 277f.) In his reflections on urban lifestyle and traditions, the contrast between Shanghai and Beijing society, and between the values each city stands for, is explored. The views expressed are similar to Wen-hsin Yeh's observations:

While Beijing stood for the refined and distilled high culture of the gentry-official-literati, Shanghai was the emporium of the trendy, the gaudy, the decorative, the conspicuous, and the city of the newly rising bourgeoisie. (Zhang 1996: 278)

This coincides with the observation of Xu Xu when comparing the more "natural and simplistic" countryside of Beijing with the more "mechanical and rational" metropolis of Shanghai. (Zhang 1996: 279)

No doubt, rural suspicion and resentment of urban values and a secret yearning for the countryside runs like a red thread through the works of many leading Chinese writers and thinkers, even of those intimately involved and immersed in metropolitan and

<sup>18</sup> See also Li, Xia: "Confucius, Playboys and Rusticated Glasperlenspieler: from Classical Chinese Poetry to Postmodernism" in *Interliteraria*, No. 5, 2000, 37-55.

national affairs for some length of time. This resentment is highlighted in Wang Meng's well-known story *Hudie* [*Butterfly*, 1980] and in Gu Cheng's poetry and fiction<sup>19</sup> and in the works of Yang Lian,<sup>20</sup> despite their years of residence in big cities in the West. In fact, this resentment has led literary critics to identify "the persistent concern with issues concerning the countryside" as the hallmark of post-Mao literature:

One distinctive feature of post-Mao literature and film is their diversity: the "literature of the wounded" (*shanghen wenxue*), "obscure poetry" (*menglong shi*), "stream-of-consciousness fiction" (*yishiliu xiaoshuo*), "roots-searching literature" (*xungen wenxue*), "avant-garde fiction" (*xianfeng xiaoshuo*), and the "Fifth Generation Film" are just a few literary and artistic phenomena since 1976. Diverse as it is, however, post-Mao literature manifests a persistent concern with issues regarding the countryside.<sup>21</sup> (Zhang 1996: 263)

<sup>19</sup> For details see Li, Xia. "Gu Cheng's Ying'er: A Journey to the West" in *Modern Chinese Literature*, Vol. 10, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1998), 135–148 and Li, Xia. "'All my flowers are dream flowers': The Role of Nature in Gu Cheng's Poetry and Prose" in: Li Xia ed. *Essays, Interviews, Recollections and Unpublished Material of Gu Cheng, 20th Century Chinese Poet: The Poetics of Death*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999, 179–197.

<sup>20</sup> See Li, Xia. "Poetry, Reality and Existence in Yang Lian's *Illusion City*" in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Bratislava), 4/2, 1995, 149–165.

<sup>21</sup> See also Ding Fan and He Yanhong: "Chinese Fiction in the Last Two Decades" in: *Chinese Literature*, Winter 1999, 5–12. The authors identify a number of literary movements in the post-Mao era, e.g. "Root-seeking" fiction, "New Era" fiction (Liu Suola, Can Xue and Xu Xingye), "Eastern stream-of-consciousness" fiction (Wang Meng), "experimental" fiction (Su Tong, Yu Hua, Ge Fei and Ye Zhaoyan), "new realist" fiction (Chi Li, Fang Fang and Liu Zhenyun), "later generation" fiction (He Dun, Xu Kun, Liu Jiming and Bi Feiyu), "feminist" fiction (Chen Ran, Lin Bai, Hai Nan and Xu Kun) and "shock-wave realism" (Liu Xinglong, Tan Ge, He Shen and Guan Renshen), "realist tradition" fiction (Lin Xi, You Fengwei, Li Guantong, Liu

However, the main problem underlying the "city-country anti-thesis" at present is the steadily accelerating migration of the rural

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Qingbang). Of the various groups listed, only the representatives of "shock-wave" fiction focus predominantly on urban society and ordinary people and their views: "However, thanks to its panoramic view of current society, "shock-wave" fiction reflects reality and our times more closely. All social problems, like state enterprises in transition, laid-off workers, corrupt officials, prostitution, confusion over values in a time of transformation, demoralization and other harsh social conflicts, are all mirrored in these "shock-wave" stories." (op. cit., 11). In a special issue of *Chinese Literature*, Winter 1999, 116–177, the following twelve Chinese writers comment on their own work in the context of Chinese literature at the turn of the century: A Cheng, Zhang Xin, Jia Pingwa, Chi Li, Zhou Daxin, Fang Fang, Guo Xuebo, Liu Zhenyun, Liang Xiaosheng, Yu Hua, Deng Youmei, Chi Zijian; significantly, only one of them expresses interest in specifically urban topics or the impact of urban life on the individual; the majority seems to be preoccupied with the individual's inner self (emotions, dreams, wishes and so on) as reflected in Liu Zhenyun's and Chi Zijian's comments: "...we finally come to realize that we know too little about this world — this human world, the inner world of human beings, the surging and scurrying of emotions, the difference between day and night, how to control your dreams (sic.) especially waking dreams, how to empathize with all the intangible lives in the boundless universe." (134) "I believe, as long as writers hold on to their imaginations and sentiments that come out of the incredible power of the imagination, one day the "elegance" of literature will be revived. The inner world of human beings — deep, powerful and often impenetrable — shall be freed. By resisting the temptations of utilitarianism, exploring the human inner world and giving full play to imagination, Chinese literature will flourish as never before." (144). The only exception is Deng Youmei (b. 1931 in Pingyuan, Shandong Province), whose works (*Na Wu* and *Snuff-Bottles*) depict life in Beijing with particular reference to the "tremendous changes" in Chinese society in recent years. In his words: "Those changes have inevitably left a deep impact on the life of Beijingers. I have tried my best to reflect such changes in my stories in a vivid and artistic way and make them known not only to Chinese readers, but also to foreign readers through *Chinese Literature*." (141). See also Zhang Ren, "Tracking Contemporary Chinese Literature. A Review of the Lu Xun Literary Award Winners" in: *Chinese Literature*, Summer 1999, 6–9.



population to the city,<sup>22</sup> a topic which has so far attracted insufficient attention not only in “serious literature” but also in “popular literature” which tends to be repetitive in form and narrative technique and to focus almost exclusively on the urban middle-class.<sup>23</sup> This was highlighted only recently in an interview with Wang Meng on the present state of Chinese literature:

What we have witnessed here is only a change of focus in subject matter — superficial descriptions of urban life have unquestionably dominated the literary scene. If there were diverse forms of expression and excellent touches of imagination under more or less the same theme, that would be only too fine. But as matters stand, most of the urban novels we currently have are of a very similar tone. Worse still, they invariably centre on bourgeois (or just phony bourgeois?) men and women who, out of sheer boredom, keep hopping from one game of desire to another. The writers apparently want people to read some “special meaning” into their texts, although these texts really contain nothing much to be interpreted. (Wang 1999: 5–24)

As literature is market-driven in present-day China (which Wang Meng considers an “encouraging development” since it helps to maintain what he calls “an ecological balance of our culture”)<sup>24</sup> the depressing topic of rural migration to metropolitan areas and its human and social costs and consequences does not appeal to the

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<sup>22</sup> This is a global phenomenon in all developing countries, particularly acute in India; but also a key factor in Western countries on the road to industrialisation in the last century.

<sup>23</sup> Naturally, this is directly related to the possibility of free choice or what Wang Meng calls “the buyer’s market” which is designed to cater to the tastes of the masses (as it does in the West). Good literature (or “substantive literature” (i.e. works that show deep concern for the welfare of common people and the “spirit of avant-garde”) will get lost among “common or even thoroughly vulgar productions” (see footnote 30, *op. cit.* 8ff.)

<sup>24</sup> Wang Meng, *op. cit.*, 8.

predominantly middle-class reading public (nor does it in the West where similar population shifts have occurred in recent years). However, in China where eighty percent of the population is still rural, this situation causes massive dislocations and insurmountable problems and the shift of one fourth of them to the city over the next twenty years will produce at least a doubling of the size of all cities and thus provide ideal conditions for the mushrooming of massive urban sprawl and "generic cities", if investment from the West is forthcoming.<sup>25</sup>

Without doubt, Singapore is *the* paradigm of the Generic City which has been rigorously tested, modified and perfected over the years as comprehensively a controlled social model with a Confucian dimension. And Koolhaas predicts:

It is unlikely that the deconstructionist model, or any other respectable contemporary propositions (what are they anyway?), has a great attraction in these circumstances. Singapore represents the exact dosage of "authority, instrumentality, and vision" necessary to appeal. In numerous architectural offices in Singapore, whose names few of us have ever heard, China's future is being prepared. In these countless new cities the skyscraper is the only surviving typology. After the iconoclasm of communism there will be a second, more efficient Ludditism, helping the Chinese toward the "desired land": market economy — but minus the decadence, the democracy, the messiness, the disorder, the cruelty of the West. Projecting outward from Singapore, an asymmetrical epicenter, there will be new Singapores across the entire mainland. Its model will be the stamp of China's modernization. Two billion people can't be wrong. (Rem Koolhaas 1995: 1087)

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<sup>25</sup> The definitive move away from the country to the cities is not a move to the city as we knew it: it is a move to the Generic City; the city so pervasive that it has come to the country. [...] Some continents, like Asia, aspire to the Generic City; others are ashamed by it. (Rem Koolhaas 1995: 1250)

While Singapore is living proof of the Confucian dictum of “giving extensively to the common people and bringing help to the multitude” (Rem Koolhaas 1995: 1037), it is also eminently equipped to control them:

The block is hypermodern. The seemingly individual foodstalls are connected by a single huge dishwasher-conveyor; on our first visit we are invited to the control room, a wall of monitors connected to hidden cameras that allow supervisors to zoom in on each table, watch each transaction at every stall. (Rem Koolhaas 1995: 1015)

Since the “generic city” has only grown over the past few decades, its real impact on the individual is not yet reflected sufficiently in contemporary Chinese literature (or Western literature, for that matter). It is difficult at present to evaluate its artistic (literary) representation in a more comprehensive way. Perhaps a more adequate form of artistic representation of social dislocation, apprehension, fragmentation and disorientation in the China of the 1990s can be found in the “artful marriage of peasant and religious kitsch” of Liu Dahong’s paintings:

And it is just these clichés, the widespread state of disquiet and instability, the tantalising decadence and enthralling disarray of contemporary urban China, that Liu Dahong’s art both reflects and revels in.<sup>26</sup> (Barmé 1999: 208ff.)

Moreover, Chinese literature (and literary criticism) seems to continue to look to rural life and culture for suitable paradigms and socio-critical reference points, as highlighted recently by Zhang Yimou in the *Toronto Globe*.<sup>27</sup> Generally speaking, the

<sup>26</sup> “...Liu presents a grotesque urban reality that in turn amuses and horrifies. Fleetingness, decay, and ruins; fortune, chance, adventure; as well as corruption, lasciviousness, and indulgence are the topos of Liu’s artistic landscape.” (Barmé 1999: 208)

<sup>27</sup> Zhang Yimou: “In China, I am referred to as a peasant filmmaker because I always made films in rural areas and every time I passed a school I would stick my head in. Many of my mother’s relatives are



same applies to the majority of the Fifth Generation filmmakers and to some extent also to the Sixth Generation directors of the mid-1990s who are still in the process of defining their political and artistic positions as well as their personal styles.<sup>28</sup> Even a cursory look at their internationally successful films as well as “substantive literature” and works of “popular fiction” produced by various groups in the 1980s and 1990s<sup>29</sup> will confirm the artists’ overt preoccupation with the life and culture of rural (not urban) China as inspirational background for socio-historical self-reflection and artistic consciousness construction.<sup>30</sup>

Although China (in contrast to Russia and the Soviet Union) has had fully urbanised cities since the sixteenth century,<sup>31</sup> the Chinese city *per se* and the human experiences of the city still

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teachers in the countryside and I have always felt a real connection to the work they do. I saw the facilities and the poor conditions that children studied in and the poverty levels. I was always touched, it was very emotional, but I don’t have this feeling when I see city schools.” Zhang Yimou: interview with Judy Stone in *The Toronto Globe* and *The Mail* (Friday, 5 May, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> See Jackie Chan’s action movies and their big city setting (Hong Kong) which however, serves mainly as a backdrop of organised urban crime and hi-tech ambience.

<sup>29</sup> See Ding Fan and He Yanhong, “Chinese Fiction in the Last Two Decades” in: *Chinese Literature*, Winter 1999, 5–12.

<sup>30</sup> The lure of the city on impoverished country people is realistically explored in Zhang Yimou’s film *Not One Less*. While Zhang Yimou portrays the city in rather negative terms, thus foreshadowing a negative ending, the government censors insisted on a *deus ex machina* happy ending (Hollywood style).

<sup>31</sup> See Davis: “...China’s cities were fully urban in the sixteenth century. This urban world was constructed on the basis of a “loose imbrication” of “social microforms” tightened periodically through gentry and merchant leadership. Thanks to China’s “amphibian” elites this urbanity could emerge without severing ties with the rural population. In the first half of this century Chinese cities grew around a cluster of modern architectural and institutional forms including factories, banks, universities, cinemas, libraries, museums, and hotels, while, by and large, preserving key elements of the older order like *huiguan*, temples, markets, theatres, and city walls.” (Davis 1995: 423)

constitute, in Zhang Yingjin's opinion, the *terra incognita* in Chinese literary criticism in many ways:

...Chinese scholars are just beginning to pay attention to the urban dimensions of literature and culture, a subject of enormous importance. (Zhang 1996: xix)

On the other hand, the longstanding city/country polarity<sup>32</sup> and its multi-faceted artistic manifestations (not dissimilar to Western city/country antithesis, particularly with regard to the negative connotations associated with the city),<sup>33</sup> constitutes in Zhang Yingjin's opinion "one of the most recurrent themes in the cultural imagination of modern China". (Zhang 1996: xvi–xvii) Since Zhang Yingjin's study is at present the only major work on this subject which focuses on Beijing and Shanghai from late Qing to the Republican period, further and more comprehensive research with the inclusion of Taiwan and Hong Kong is long overdue.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For details on the theory of "a cultural continuum" of country and city in China see F. W. Mote (1970) *City in Traditional Chinese Civilization*, 42–49. For differences between: *shizhen* (town) and *xiangcun* (village) and *shizhen* and *duhui* (city or metropolis) see Fei Xiaotong (1948: 1–34, 141–152).

<sup>33</sup> According to Handlin, Rousseau and others had already warned of the inevitable results of urban detachment from nature before the process had even taken form: "Of all animals man is least capable of living in flocks. Penned up like sheepmen soon lose all. The breath of man is fatal to his fellows [...] Cities are the burial pit of the human species." (J. J. Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'éducation*, Paris 1854), Book I, p. 36. (see Mumford: *City in History*); cf. also idealisation of big cities (Handlin's Introduction: 1–26). **The Country and the City:** (Zhang, 273); Raymond Williams: 'The Country and the City' **Negative Side:** Zhang 273. "The city: grime, glamour, geometries of glass, steel, and concrete [...] Yet immanent in that gritty structure is another: invisible, imaginary, made of dream and desire, agent of all transformations" Ihab Hassan, 94.

<sup>34</sup> Further studies may analyze configurations of the city and the country in Taiwan (where "native soil literature" [*xiangtu wenxue*] has exerted an enormous impact on the development of literature and film since the 1960s) as well as in Hong Kong (where the dominance of the city

Without doubt, in the light of the radical changes that have taken place all over China in the post-Mao era and particularly in recent years, the configurations of life in the city have become an even more complex and challenging subject. This is highlighted by Zhang Yingjin in a brief schematic outline of recent literary developments in the "Afterword" to his study *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (1996) and the widespread disintegration of traditional value systems and social (family) bonding. The confusion permeating Chinese urban society in the 1990s is paradigmatically reflected in the contradictory reception of Jia Pingwa's novel *Feidu* (*The Abandoned Capital*)<sup>35</sup> or *Necropolis* and the controversy associated with its publication in 1993. While some critics hail the novel and the experiences of its writer-protagonist Zhuang Zhidie as "a masterful depiction of the ambience of late-twentieth-century China", a "modern-day *Story of the Stone*" and a bold exposure of the "dark side of Chinese society, designed to encourage national reflection", others dismiss it as a cheap commercial ploy of a sensationalist hack and money-driven author of titillating pornography. The "abandoned capital" of the title refers to marriage, culture, religion, politics, business, that is, all aspects of the life of individuals and society as a whole (naturally, also to a former capital) and the threat to society resulting from it:

The range of opinions about *The Abandoned Capital* makes us confront the image of a place that, in this present age of transformation, can be claimed to be nothing less than an "abandoned capital society." Ours is the world of the abandoned capital. Everywhere you look, the basic values of civilization — justice, truth, ideals, and the sublime — are in a state of alienation. Morality itself has nothing more than a utilitarian value. All we dream of now and hope for in the future are money and sex. The unprincipled process on moneymaking and sexual gratification has

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is always undermined by the return of the "ghostly country" that haunts public memories)." (Zhang 1996: 268)

<sup>35</sup> Jia Pingwa, *Feidu*, Beijing chubanshe, 1993.



gravely undermined the pillars of civilized society.<sup>36</sup>  
(Xiao Xialin 1993: 2)

While Jia Pingwa was considered a serious (“highbrow”) writer before his “fall”, the Beijing writer Wang Shuo (b. 1958) never made a secret of his affinity to popular culture (*tongsu wenhua*) and lifestyle.)<sup>37</sup> And if Wang Meng lamented in a recent interview on contemporary Chinese literature the absence of humour in Chinese writers,<sup>38</sup> Wang Shuo has plenty of it and uses it freely to depict the urban underbelly of the Chinese society in his novels and stories, which has caused considerable disquiet among leading critics such as Yan Jingming who characterised Wang Shuo’s fictional urban Beijing youths as follows:

They are bored and frustrated, creating their own diversions. They don’t give a damn whether normal people sympathise with them or view them with distaste. They do nothing, and treat those who go about their business earnestly with ridicule and derision. In practical terms they are the “dregs” (*zhazi*) rejected by society; their actions show them to be

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted from Geremie Barmé (1999: 184); the author also points out that Jia Pingwa’s novel was not indicative of the wider preferences of China’s urban readers. He also draws attention to the dramatic rise of the Chinese publishing and media industry in the 1990s: “The publishing industry, like the Chinese media in general, had grown quickly since the early 1990s. According to reports, a new newspaper was produced at the rate of one every one and a half days in China in 1993, bringing the total number of dailies and weeklies to two thousand by early 1994. In particular, papers with commercial and lifestyle news were on the increase. This was not surprising given the economic developments in China that emphasized the consumer and the investor over all else.” (op. cit., 186).

<sup>37</sup> Wang Shuo, “Wode xiaoshuo” [My Fiction]. *Renmin wenxue* [People’s Literature], No. 3, 1989, 108. Also, Zuo Shula, “Buru ‘liu’ zide qile, xiexie Wang Shuo”, *Dangdai* [Contemporary] Taipei, No 4, 1989; for an English translation see: Geremie Barmé and Linda Jaivin (1992) *New Ghosts, Old Dreams: Chinese Rebel Voices*, New York: Times Books) 1992.

<sup>38</sup> Wang Mang, op. cit., p.12.

blatantly out of step with or in oppositon to the normal order and the moral precepts of the society. Their psychological makeup determines that they are completely incompatible with the environment, and when the rest of us look down upon them with disgust and displeasure they respond with an even more dismissive attitude.<sup>39</sup> (Yan Jingming 1989: 87)

Wang Shuo became extremely popular with Beijing youths in the late 1980s and is by now the most prominent and successful exponent of urban Chinese counter-culture, generally referred to as "liumang" culture.<sup>40</sup>

Wang Shuo proudly asserts his artistic independence and distance from serious literature:

Even now I wouldn't say I'm a master of the technique of writing fiction. Bugged if I know all the ins and outs of it. And if you want me to natter on about intellectual content, philosophy, the grand sweep.... well, give me a break. (Zuo 1989: 133)

In the light of Wang Shuo's success, four of his stories have been turned into feature films.<sup>41</sup> The rebellious irreverence of "idle" urban youths and their disregard for law and social conventions

<sup>39</sup> Yan Jingming, "Wanzhu yu dushide chongtu — lun Wang Shuo xiaoshuode jiazhi xuanze" [The Wanzhu and the City Clash — On Value Choices in Wang Shuo's Fiction] in *Wenxue pinglun* [Literary Criticism], No. 6, 1989, p. 87, quoted in (Barmé 1992: 33).

<sup>40</sup> See Geremie Barmé, "Wang Shuo and *Liumang* ('Hooligan') Culture" in: *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 28, July 1992, 23–64.

<sup>41</sup> See Zhang Zheng, *Wan zhu Wang Shuo* [The Trouble Shooters], *Zhongguo dianyingbao* [China Film News Weekly], 5 November 1988 which also has a short plot summary of the four films. *Beijing Youth* even referred to 1988 as the 'Wang Shuo year of Chinese cinema' (see Barmé, op. cit., 24) The four films are: *Wanzhu* [The Trouble Shooters] d. Mi Jiashan, 1988, Emei Film Studio; *Fengkuang de daijia* [Obsession] d. Zhou Xiaowen, 1988, Xi'an Film Studio; *Yiban shi huoyan, yiban shi haishui* [Hot and Cold, Measure for Measure] 1988; *Lunhui* [Samsara] 1988.

depicted in his works are more and more seen as a potentially destabilising element and a threat to intellectual, social and political life in China. And since the *liumang* mentality represents a broad spectrum of virulent social attitudes,<sup>42</sup> some close to crime, Wang Shuo's real intentions are at best as ambiguous as the ideological, intellectual and emotional confusion and disorientation in present-day Chinese society, grotesquely highlighted in the surrealistic final scene of Wang Shuo's film *The Trouble Shooters* [Wan zhu, d. Mi Jiashan, 1988) where Western-style fashion models, characters dressed in Beijing opera costumes, female bodybuilders in bikinis, PLA soldiers, Qing Dynasty aristocrats, Kuomintang generals, Red Guards, public security officers, peasants and factory workers dance with one another to the sound of contemporary popular music.<sup>43</sup> The background is unam-

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<sup>42</sup> John Minford has probably summed up the phenomenon most succinctly: "The original *liumang* is to be seen cruising the inner city streets on his Flying Pigeon bicycle, looking (somewhat lethargically) for the action, reflective sunglasses flashing a sinister warning. Liumang in everyday speech is a harsh word. It is the word for anti-social behaviour, a category of crime. But the *liumang* generation as I see it is a wider concept. Rapist, whore, black-marketeer, unemployed youth, alienated intellectual, frustrated artist or poet — the spectrum has a dark satanic end, its long middle band of relentless grey, and, shining at the other end, a patch of visionary light. It is an embryonic alternative culture." (John Minford, "Picking Up the Pieces", in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 August 1985, p. 30.) For a detailed discussion of the socio-cultural background and tradition of the *liumang* phenomenon (with its roots in Shanghai), see Barmé, op. cit., 29–32.

<sup>43</sup> The film tells the story of three young men in Beijing who set up a new-age private company (Tripple-T Company) designed to make easy money by solving problems for the urban population in difficulties in Deng Xiaoping's brave new world of private enterprise. The clients seeking help from three con-men are a young writer who wants to win a literary prize, an unhappily married housewife, a man with seminal emission problems and a young man (with a Shanghai accent) stuck with his bedridden mother (a former revolutionary). For a discussion of Wang Shuo's films see also: Paul G. Pickowicz (1995: 193–206). (Barmé refers to the film as *The Operators*.)



biguously urban, and this black comedy programmatically screams at the spectator to the heavy metal music of rock star Cui Jian:

I once dreamed big of modern city life  
 But now I have no idea what to do.  
 High-rise buildings are popping up everywhere  
 But life is bloody hard, I tell you.  
 I take a friend to a pub for a chat  
 Pop songs blare from a stereo.  
 This is what you think, but that is what you say  
 Everyone wears a thick mask.  
 How do you expect me to cope?<sup>44</sup>

Without doubt, the dreams and hopes which urban youths placed in the city as a symbol of progress have not come true. The individual's disquiet and disaffection are clearly stated as a kind of leitmotif right at the beginning of the film, and are not alleviated by the events that follow despite continuous (black) comic relief and the grotesque *dance macabre* in the final scene. The dream of a better future in the metropolis as a driving force for millions of Chinese to abandon their rural homes is completely destroyed in Wang Shuo's black tale *No Man's Land* [Qianwan bie ba wo dang ren] (1989)<sup>45</sup> when at the nation's celebrations over Tang Yuanbao's Olympic triumph in Sapporo (of all places!)

<sup>44</sup> Translated by the author of this paper. The second stanza ends also in: "How do you expect me to cope?"

<sup>45</sup> Wang Shuo, *Qianwan bie ba wo dang ren* [*No Man's Land*], serialised in the Nanjing literary bi-monthly *Zhongshan*, 1989, issues 4-6 (September-December), pp. 4-37 and 4-46 respectively. See Barmé, op. cit., 51-58. (This is the story of Tang Yuanbao who is selected by the Chinese authorities to redeem China's long lost national pride (humiliation by the colonial powers of the West and Japan) by winning a gold medal at the Olympic Games in Sapporo. Under the surface of the farce, grotesqueness and absurdity is a great deal of astute political comment and insight into human nature. (Geremie Barmé quotes the Chinese playwright Gao Xingjian who attributed the lack of success of the Theatre of the Absurd in China to the fact that real life in China was "far more absurd than anything that could be put on the stage": Barmé, op. cit., 55).

the massive mushroom cloud of an atomic explosion unfolds over a city, casting a huge shadow over the dry Chinese summer landscape, thus turning Mao Dun's *Twilight (Midnight)*<sup>46</sup> into everlasting night and Deng Xiaoping's brave new world of progress and reform into unfathomable darkness.

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## **The Possible Fate of the Semiotics of Translation**

**PEETER TOROP**

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The semiotics of translation is a relatively young interdisciplinary field whose dominant could lie either in translation studies or in semiotics. As a part of translation studies, the semiotics of translation examines different aspects of translatability, starting with the linguistic worldview and ending with the functioning of a translation text as a cultural text. For translation studies, the semiotic aspect of text analysis — the notion of semiotic coherence — is important. As a part of semiotics, the semiotics of translation is connected with the comparative analysis of sign systems, of functional connections between sign systems and with the study of mutual correlation inside the semiotics of translation. As a part of semiotics, the semiotics of translation has a place both in theoretical and applied semiotics.

As an autonomous discipline, the semiotics of translation is one of the basic disciplines of cultural analysis. It allows us to describe the processes of cultural communication and metacommunication by means of a universal model of the semiotic translation process and to study the degree of the semiotic translatability of sign systems and complex associations of systems that emerge in the intertextual, interdiscursive and intermedial space of the contemporary culture.

The methodological transition of translation studies to a new stage of development is expressed by J. S. Holmes, who already in 1978 wrote about the necessity for four complementary theories of translation. Above all a theory of the translation process is needed

to render sense to what happens when a person decides to translate something. Secondly, a theory of the translation product is required to fix the specific nature of translation as a separate type of texts. Thirdly, a theory of translational function is requested to understand the behaviour of translation in a recipient culture. These three theories cannot be normative, since they try to describe the situations which have emerged but do not make prescriptions. Normativity, however, has its importance, fourthly, in the theory of translation didactics (Holmes 1988: 95).

Holmes has basically formulated a program of interdisciplinary translation studies, although different translation theories have developed it to different extents and the development is far from being balanced. Holmes had no illusions, calling balanced translation studies a disciplinary utopia (Holmes 1988: 109).

At large, the development of the theory of translation can be presented as a shift of emphasis from language to text, from text to culture, from culture to the entire society. What is important is the connection, on the one hand, between the culture and the language, and on the other hand, the connections of the language and the text with their socio-cultural environment.

The traditional theory of translation centred around the language and the text has not disappeared, but it has been joined by new culturally-oriented concepts. This has also changed the interrelations of the theory of translation with other disciplines, above all with comparative literature. One of the current terms that signifies the theory of translation is 'translation studies' which is associated with the trend of cultural studies which emerged in the 1960s. M. Snell-Hornby distinguishes two main trends in the theory of translation. The first one is *translatology* (*Übersetzungswissenschaft*) that is foremost connected with Germany. The second one places the whole of translation studies into the context of comparative literature. This trend originates from Denmark but is also connected with England and Israel. The novelty of the first trend lies in the interpretation of a part proceeding from the whole, i.e. in the movement from the text to the sign. The second trend lays emphasis on the movement from macrostructure to compositional coherence (e.g. text and title) and to lexical coherence (M. Snell-Hornby, 1989: 317–319; 1988).



The study of translation activity within the boundaries of cultural studies has allowed to designate the theory of translation also as intercultural studies. S. Bassnett, to whom belongs this idea, differentiates three stages in the recent theory of translation. Firstly, the influence of polysystems theory has enabled different discourses of translation to be distinguished, and a position for translation is looked for in the hierarchy of discourses of the recipient culture. Secondly, the dependence of the translator and the text on a concrete situation and a way of manipulating with the text are asserted. The third stage is characterized by poststructuralist pluralism both in respect to making sense of the source text and regarding the search for the method of translation (Bassnett 1993: 145–148).

Thus, the situation of the theory of translation can be observed from two viewpoints. One viewpoint emerges as a result of the diversity of metalanguages and theoretical positions created by new conceptions. This pluralistic viewpoint can be joined by a historical viewpoint that allows to connect new tendencies with the history of the traditional theory of translation. The second position presupposes the methodological readiness of the observer. In the first case we can notice the conceptual incoherence within the translation studies (D. Delabastita 1991: 138). In the second case we can see the projection of new ideas upon the already existing science as fertilizing ideas supporting the interdisciplinary approach, not as merely new terminology.

The complementarity of these two viewpoints allows us to see the interconnectedness of scientific processes. For example, while in the recent years the interest in the theory of translation has been predominantly in the contacts between the translation and its recipient culture, the same problems permeate at the same time also those academic traditions which have been more interested in the source text, its language and culture. This way the so-called *skopos*-theory was born which claims that in every translation its function or aim dominates (K. Reiss, H. J. Vermeer 1984 (1991): 96).

The next and a very fertile step is the methodology of the target-oriented analysis of the source text, according to which translation is the creation of a functional target text, and where the

relationship with the source text is maintained according to the aim of the translation (C. Nord 1991: 232). Even in considering the prospective reception it is still important to proceed from the aim to retain the source text and not to take into consideration only the self-interest of the recipient culture. To sum up, it could be said that also in the development of science a certain self-regulation is noticeable — even theories far from practical translation fuse at some points into a whole, theoretical nihilism begins to support tradition, and multidisciplinary may at some moment become a prerequisite for the emergence of an interdisciplinary and understanding methodology.

In the following I will try to describe these aspects which are important in the treatment of the subject of “Translation and/as reception” and later to connect these with one another with the help of a unitary methodology.

**Translation as reception.** A translation text as an alien text obtains a special value in a new culture. It has a capacity to represent very different things. In the first place, every translation appears as an implicit criticism of its source text, i.e. it mirrors its attitude towards the original text on the scale of identity-difference. Already due to the use of the new language, one of the text's ontological features will emerge — the capacity to differ from itself: “...a text difference is not its uniqueness, its special identity. It is the text's way of differing from itself. And this difference is perceived only in the act of rereading” (Johnson 1985: 120). In the case of a translated text, sourceness is much more important than in the case of an ordinary text. Translation contains information about its story of origin, about its attitude towards the original text and about its hopes concerning the new culture. Namely these intrinsic qualities of a translation have come to be the research object of translation theorists who are less interested in the reception and consumption of translations than in the intrinsic quality of translations themselves which in its turn results from the specific features of the translational behaviour in a given culture (Toury 1993: 17–18).

Proceeding from sourceness the concept of cultural text should be referred to. A translation of a literary work can be a translation of literature, but it can also be a translation of culture. There is

justification to the claim that, on the one hand, a literary work is a diachronic text of a literary history, while on the other hand it is a synchronic text of a cultural system — and between the literary and the cultural there rule intertextual connections (White 1989: 294, 301).

Reception is complemented by a conception according to which the literary aspect presupposes the aesthetic distance in relation to the text and the cultural aspect is related to the possibility of identification of the text (Assmann 1995: 241–242).

Thus, from an intrinsic point of view, a translation is a space of literary and cultural reception that a translator can organize knowingly, shape intuitively, or leave unattended due to different reasons. The level of reception is actually framed already by the choice of a translation method.

A translation is reception both in respect to its internal features as well as in respect to several of its external features, above all in respect to being a part of a larger whole. Orientation towards national literature both in cultural politics as well as in translation practice mirrors the reception on the level of national culture. The reception of literature (epochs, styles, groupings) becomes manifest in the choice of the translated authors. The reception of an author is shaped by the choice of the author's text and, as mentioned earlier, the reception of a text is largely dependent on the choice of the translation method (Torop 1989: 349–384; 2000).

**Translation and reception.** In the study of translation as reception we obtain all the necessary data from the comparison of the two texts, the translation and the source text. Everything pertaining to reception is mirrored on the level of text parts, elements and signs. But this is only one aspect of reception. A translation text can never function alone in culture. As an autonomous text, its contents can represent a certain subject, it can mediate the positions and style of the author of the source text, it can introduce new literary forms into the recipient literature and new language forms into the recipient language, it can help the reader to understand the source text by means of the translation and it can create a translation text which will become a part of the recipient literature (see R. P. Roberts 1992: 8).



This kind of traditional treatment of translation could be called textual translation. Textual translation is the translation of one whole text into another whole text, and the relations between them are those of a prototext and a metatext. While being a whole text, a translation nevertheless proceeds from the source text, it is a representing-describing-replacing secondary text of the source text. As a secondary text it lacks the uniqueness of the original text. An ontological characteristic of translation is serialization since every actual translation is always only an example of a mediation possibility. Most of the translation theorists consider the translation process to be the object of translation studies namely because the scientific model of this process can help to describe the fundamentally different possibilities of translation in a systematic way, render comparable the different kinds of translation, and create conditions for their theoretical and non-evaluative analysis. "Good" and "bad" can become conceivable categories only in the evaluation of one or the other type of translation together with taking into consideration the application of a certain translation method. Ontologically, serialization of translation justifies the possibility of treating every translation as reception since there is no absolute or ideal translation.

While comparing the translation and the source text, we should not forget the culture. In the translation of a text into another text, along with the change in language also the relation of the implicitness-explicitness of the textual elements changes. The cultural backgrounds of the two languages and texts may be different or in partial contact, and a translation can reveal some unexpected connections. This is the reason why culture is an essential object of analysis besides language (and by means of language) in both texts. A. P. Frank and B. Bödeker have performed an interesting experiment to systematize parameters connected with culture both in the translation text and the source text (A. P. Frank, B. Bödeker 1991: 41–63). Firstly, they discern the degree of explicitness which contains cultural connotations, cultural terms, cultural key terms and cultural stereotypes. The next parameter is range which includes inner-cultural characteristics (area, region, social class), followed by elements representing national culture, then trans-cultural elements (for

example, the comparison of Eastern and Western cultures in a text), and inter-cultural elements which are external to the cultures represented in the source text and in the translation. Although the authors themselves refer to the terminological overburdening, they still use also the concept of cultural universals (cf. Noé, 1995: 41–51; Mihayara 1995: 30–40; Hogan 1997: 223–249).

The third parameter includes qualitative parts of culture such as religion, literature, art, sport etc. The fourth is the parameter of history, based on the cultural markedness of the time flow in the text. Another parameter is the type of text which allows to define the relations of reality and fiction. The last parameter is the degree of integration of cultural elements which is the basis for their hierarchization in the text and for the demarcation of translator's activity (A. P. Frank, B. Bödeker 1991: 46–48). Translation of a text into another text involves also the translation of a culture into another culture — hence, language, text and culture are those parts of the text which can be ordered according to either their importance or one's will; which can be mediated with the help of one another, or whose proportions established in the source text can be maintained during the translation.

A translation text is a text that belongs simulatenously both to literary history and culture, and understanding of the text presupposes that the reader has preliminary knowledge of both languages. A translation text can enter a new culture in the form of many texts. Literary communication is rarely limited to the chain Author — Text — Reader. In the culture as a system of pre-reading, reading and rereading, it is only natural that communication is followed by metacommunication (Torop 1999, 2000). The reader becomes culturally active, he becomes an author or a translator, a critic or a teacher, a TV- or a radio-commentator, an author of a stage play or a director of a screen adaptation. Every one of them creates his text on the basis of someone else's text, thus creating a metatext. In a semiotical sense they are all translators. But as the subject of this paper is not semiotics of translation, I limit myself to this part of metacommunication which concerns translation directly and which I shall call metatextual translation. Although in a strict sense this is a tautology since translation already is a metatext, the justification for differen-

tiating this kind of translation type lies in its dependence on other metatexts or in their relations of complementarity. The primary possibility of metatextual translation is the translation of the original text not simply into an autonomous text but into a book. Besides the translation text, a book can contain an introductory article by the author, a scientist or the translator, it can give information about the text's origin, background, reception etc. At the end of the book we may find commentaries, word explanations, instructions for pronunciation etc. In translating a text into a book the translator can take into account the possibility of compensating problems of untranslatability or the difficulties of explaining cultural facts outside the text itself. He can direct the translation either to a much larger audience or to a narrow group of interested individuals. The translation and the metatexts can behave independently of one another or as an ensemble even within the same book covers.

What appears as a problem, however, is the relationship of the metatexts of different types. Next to the translation there may stand metatexts with presuppositional (creating preliminary knowledge) or interpretative dominant. The first ones give a necessary background, the others create an attitude, offer a reading version. Both have their own dangers. The first one may turn into a load of facts and dates, the second one may presume a liberty of reading. But the same may also happen in culture.

Culture is the second manifestation of metatextual translation, appearing in most cases in the form of literary culture. Besides the translation itself, a culture, like a book, contains a great number of possible texts. But differently from a book, these metatexts are dispersed in space and time. A book may create a whole, but culture is generally a collage. It is rather usual in culture that before reading a text we read something about the text, be it an article in an encyclopaedia, a scientific magazine or a newspaper, an advertisement, a screen adaptation or a stage version. Thus, before we actually read the translation itself, we as participants in culture already know something about the translation and in a certain sense have already read it. But an average bearer of culture is encircled by a vast amount of different texts. These texts are a part



of literary life, in the same way as literary life is a part of literary culture, and as literary culture is a part of the politics of culture.

A book has an important role in the process of reception: it has an ability to specify the message. Culture (including also book culture and publishing culture) has an ability to adapt, to level or to politicize (cf. Venuti 1993: 208–233; Beaugrande 1992; Meschonnic 1994: 11–24). Similar processes take place in a book and in a culture. Both of them may offer an individual author and an individual text, but they may also offer a simple reading-matter. The point of departure for the polysystems theory is namely the fact that a translation is subject to the fate of all texts in a culture — interference, intertwining with others (see Even-Zohar 1990: 59).

Of course, a translation as a new text may considerably influence the habitual relations in a culture and become a mirror to or a changer of the cultural repertoire (see Even-Zohar 1997: 355–363). But with the entrance into a body of texts which is characterized by a certain way of reading or consuming of texts (*habitus*), not only the attitude towards the text as a whole will change, but also the reception of textual elements will change, textual elements will become elements of the repertoire (Toury 1991: 187).

It could be claimed that the aggressiveness of reception processes towards every new text has influenced the creators of texts, including translators and translation theorists. Thus, the term 'adequacy' has been replaced by the concepts of 'acceptability' and 'applicability' which mirror the new kind of pragmatism (see Doherty 1997: 2).

The diffusion of texts in culture has created confusion in the differentiation between the 'own' and the 'alien', and due to the adaptation of the alien into the own text or the playing with the alien that is characteristic of our time, the behaviour of texts as translations has become a general feature of texts so that G. Toury has even begun to employ the concept of 'assumed translation' (Toury 1995: 31–35). The fusion of boundaries between the source text and the translation, between the translation and the culture has created a specific situation for the translator who is one of the most significant shapers of the reception process. While traditio-

nally the invisibility of the translator has been considered one of the characteristics of a good translation, recently the need for the explicit presence of the translator in the text (in the form of forewords, instructions for reception etc.) and the responsibility of the translator for the fate of the translation has come to be more stressed (see Lane-Mercier, 1997: 43–68).

Besides the philological and cultural questions, the problems of metatextual translation have brought into the translation theory also a number of socio-political and ethical questions. The theory of translation, changing under the influence of time, cannot ignore these questions. The emergence of those problems has created confusion, but it has also unexpectedly influenced the methodological searches. Without looking at these more closely I would still like to refer to two other types of translation which are important from the viewpoint of the development of translation theory.

In- and intertextual translation is related to the already mentioned fact that there are almost no pure texts in a culture. The author, the translator, the reader, even the text — all of them have their own memory of text. Literary studies have been long enough investigating the poetics of the alien word, literary influences etc. But the existing models of the translation process allow to study also those problems more systematically since the empirical description will become supported by the unity of the theoretical model. For example, a quote and an allusion are comparable with an exact and free translation, i.e. quotation and referring can be described as methods of translation and an alien element in a text can be treated as a translation into a text.

Analogous possibilities are offered by extratextual translation which designates translation from one sign system into another or into many others. Illustration, staging or screen adaptation of a literary text can be described as types of translation, and the translational approach creates a possibility for a unitary typology (see Torop 2000b). This has been lacked especially by filmmakers because by means of the way of translating out of text the particularity and poetics of a genre can be inferred. In all the above-mentioned cases it is important to understand that the recipient is dealing with a secondary text or a metatext or a bi- or a polytext, i.e. the value and significance of the message increases

when the recipient knows something also about the source text(s). It is characteristic that in our time of different media and their fusion the extratextual translation has become one of the factors which influence the methods of analysis of the activity called translation. Thus, a special kind of translation such as screening of literature helps us to find a better approach to the questions like what is a translation, when does a mediated text cease to be a translation, and hence — what are the ontological boundaries of a translation text and a translation activity (cf. Remael 1995: 125–131; Mouren 1993: 113–122).

The perception of the dynamics of translation boundaries is also the basis for the internal division of the semiotics of translation:

**1. Semiotics of translation as translation of semiotics.** The easier side of the translation of semiotics is connected with the mediation of the linguistic worldview where the problems range from the existence or non-existence of grammatical categories (gender, number etc.) through the practices of signification (terms of relations, names of colours etc) to the etiquette and to the psychological or sociocultural associations of the language. One important aspect of the translation of semiotics is the consideration of the relationship between explicitness and implicitness both on the level of language and culture and on the level of the text. For semiotics, it is customary to differentiate between the recognition and the understanding of a sign, i.e. to see signness. But due to the rationality of translation activity, there often arises a problem connected with the explication of the concealed (implicit). As seen from the viewpoint of the theory of translation, different aspects of implicit information can be distinguished: implicit information can be communicated with varying degrees of strength; implicit information can convey a potentially open-ended range of thoughts; the responsibility for implicit information can be shared between the communicator and the audience to varying degrees (Gutt 1996: 248). As a result of this, the explicating activity does not go without its dangers: “Since implicit and explicit information differ so significantly, it is likely that the explication of implicit information will change the meaning of the translated text” (Gutt 1996: 248). From the viewpoint of semiotics, vagueness is an operational



term in the interpretation of signs and is paired with the term 'ambiguity': "*Ambiguity* is used especially to refer to situations where the meanings are conflicting or incompatible. /---/ *Ambiguity* is regarded as lying on a continuum between *hopelessness* and *complete resolution*" (Scarpitti 1998: 26).

In the attempts to solve this problem, 'functionalism' has become a kind of a magic word for the theory of translation (cf. Nord 1997). From the viewpoint of the semiotics of translation, Dinda Gorfée's conclusion is dynamic to the same degree: "Translation is essentially an affair of self-referential iconicity. The universe of discourse (objectual reality) of source text and target text experiments with the space between text-internal and text-external reality, between the creative tension and mutual constraints of the dynamical object with the immediate object. In its different stages, translation moves from the firstness of mood-scape (image) through the secondness of worldscape (diagram) to the thirdness of mindscape (metaphor). In this process, translation creates for itself more and more referential freedom and space for (creative and/or doctrinaire) maneuvering of meanings" (Gorfée 1997: 82).

Semiotics has an equal part with linguistics in the solution of the above-mentioned problems. The use of the term 'sign' or the complementing of linguistic coherence with semiotic coherence is not merely a play with metalanguage but refers to the understanding of the semiotic peculiarity of translation activity.

**2. Complementary translation semiotics** is an approach based on culture and metacommunication. To signify this, I have extended J. Catford's term 'total translation'. The understanding of total translation begins with admitting that culture means the diffusion of texts, the formation of some texts on the basis of others, and the existence of an original text in a complementary form, as a body of metatexts. For one reader, a novel is a book; for another, a comic strip based on the novel; for the third reader it is a review of the novel; for the fourth one, it is a card from the library catalogue; for the fifth one, it is the cover illustration; for the sixth one, it is the screen or the stage version of the novel etc. In culture, a novel can be read without the original text, and the metatexts can be consumed in a random succession. Translation into/of culture is

a semiotical problem and the existence of texts and authors in a culture depends on the amount and forms of their ways of existence. In a typological approach, it is important to distinguish between the already-mentioned textual, metatextual, extratextual, and in- and intertextual translation.

**3. Social translation semiotics** is related to the term 'habitus' which connects the habit of consuming a certain kind of information with the habit of discarding another kind of information. It is concerned with both individual reading (consumption of culture) and social reading. One aspect of this is translation as a part of postcolonial studies. For example, D. Robinson writes: "Translation plays three sequential but overlapping roles in postcolonial studies: — as a channel of colonization, parallel to and connected with education and the overt or covert control of markets and institutions; — as a lightning-rod for cultural inequalities continuing after the collapse of colonialism; and — as a channel of decolonization" (Robinson 1997: 31). Reading is influenced politically, and the mediation of development countries and small cultures has often meant tendentious treatment of texts (see Bassnett, Trivedi 1999, Tarasti 1998). The phenomenon of the dominant culture or cultural hegemony has always been apparent in translation activity. But social translation semiotics includes another kind of social reading and rereading. Gender studies has expanded also into the analysis of translation activity and studies translation with consideration for the spirit of age and the dynamics of cultural representation, and in moving from a feminine world into the a world defined for a woman (Simon 1996). This means that the description of translation process can be more differentiated: "The recognition of the gendered construction of meaning in any textual practice makes possible a more differentiated understanding of translation process" (Flotow 1997: 95). There are yet other possibilities of social approach and, most of the time, semiotics of culture is probably their most productive means of description.

**4. Processual translation semiotics** proceeds from the conviction that semiotically, the realization of different processes of translation in culture can be described with the help of a universal model of the translation process. The advantage of this description

is that it is systematic and allows for the resultant comparability of translation types. In the book *Total Translation* (1995, 2000a) I have described by means of one model the ordinary interlinguistic translation, the intersemiotic translation (on the material of screen adaptations) and the intralinguistic translation on the level of the parts of text (from allusions to quotations).

**5. Radical translation semiotics** is a relatively less developed but nevertheless a very important field as it involves problems of intersemiosis. An illustration in a book, an autonomous painting on the subject of a poem, or a poem as a translation of a painting, sounds in a picture and pictures in a verbal text — all of these are phenomena where the difference in material between the original and the translation is so great that we cannot talk about translation in its ordinary sense. But even so this involves mediation, and the change in the relationship between the verbal and the visual in the present-day culture provides semiotics with opportunities to describe research objects that are only about to be born. Thus, it is very appropriate to recall Quine's concepts of radical translation, home language and jungle language.

Thus, the subject from which the present treatment started — translation and reception — shows us the natural approach of the theory of translation and the other interpretations of translation activity to semiotics as a science offering an interdisciplinary viewpoint. Thinking of the semiotics of translation we do not have to think of the expansion of semiotics. It is the fate of semiotics to belong to the interpretation of translation and translation activity. Hence, the semiotics of translation as a discipline legalizing this connection has a natural right to existence as well.

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## ***"Being Elsewhere"* — Chronotopes of "Never" and "Nowhere" in the Works of Contemporary Trans-Cultural Writers**

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Otherness has become one of the central categories in the culture, literature, philosophy of Western modernity. "Other" helps to define the norm, acting as a negative point of reference, giving birth to various exclusion strategies and stereotypic images, which have been by now quite thoroughly described. Development of postmodern theories of otherness in the last decades had led to re-grouping of the major oppositions of self/other, native/alien, putting the "other", the "different" in the center, giving him/her the voice, which is clearly seen in the active development of various cultural critical theories and mini-discourses, and at the same time, powerlessly stating again and again the absolute enigmatic nature of otherness. Postcolonial theory, as one of the oldest and widest in its grasp on the world map of otherness discourses, as well as actively developing lately trans-cultural, hemispheric, continental, transatlantic and other studies with neo-universal, global, and comparative bents, have tried to get rid of the "radical alterity", accentuating trans-cultural interactions and their cognitive results, refraining from regarding the "world literature" in the usual segments of separate national traditions and languages, as they had been interpreted before, realized in the popular concept of post-colonial dissolving of national culture as a stable construct and language as teleology. Homi Bhabha puts in the basis of his comparative theorizing various global, in his view, cultural, political, psychological influences, concepts and themes, which allows him to bring together, e.g. such aesthetically completely

different writers as Nadine Gordimer and Toni Morrison (Bhabha 1994: 13–18). This understanding of “world literature” claims to bring back globality and universalism into the sphere of literary criticism, but in fact, is potentially based itself on exclusion. The process of finding more and more “others” is principally endless — we shall always be able to find voices, that no one has heard as yet. Formulated in respect of a certain area, postcolonial categories cannot work for all other cultural regions and need be necessarily verified for each particular milieu, which brings us back to the problematics of radical/non-radical nature of “différance”. Thus, the very catchy metaphor of “un-home-le-ness” (ib. 10, 12), offered by Bhabha (and borrowed from Freud through Lacan), as a specific lack of preferable point of cultural reference, a curious indiscriminacy between “self” and “other”, requires closer definition each time when it is applied to a concrete literary phenomenon and region, first of all, in the direction of adding the personal, individual dimension, and also — rejecting the supremacy of the oppositional and insurgent discourses. Defining this specific ambivalent state of constant balancing, Salman Rushdie calls it “straddling of the two cultures, that sometimes turns out to be falling between two stools” (Rushdie 1991: 15) and points out the “at once plural and partial nature” (ib.) of the un-homed identities. The concept of “un-home-le-ness” signalizes the efforts of postcolonial theorists to change the predominantly political discourse to the cultural-ontological-psychological, and in certain cases — aesthetic as well.

Today such a large cultural area, that never really came into the zone of postcolonial theorists’ interests is the post-Soviet region — too exotic and largely unavailable in its varied cultural/ linguistic/ literary representations to the rest of the world. Gayatri Spivak, e.g. characteristically uses the word “post-Soviet” in her recent *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999) only in temporal, not a cultural-spatial sense, interpreting it invariably as a mentally insuperable border of division. Her term “post-Soviet” does not strive to define what is inside this area, but rather is meant to exclude this material from that general, blurred idea of the world trans-national cultural globality that the scholar offers as an alternative to postcolonial

theory. The umbrella term "post-Soviet literature" also causes doubts, because it again describes only the temporal condition and is marked with some left-over patronizing effect of the old Soviet terms like "literature of the peoples of the USSR". Disciplinary divisions in Russia have remained the same today, and the majority of scholars still continue to transmit the cultural-colonizing ideologies of the Soviet times, e.g. automatically reproducing the Stalinist models of multiculturalism: "Soviet in its contents, national in its form". Postcolonial and cultural critical problematics, even in relation to "native" material, remain in Russia un-popular exotics, which is connected also with a more substantial problematics of re-conceptualizing the unstable concept of national identity and ideology that Russia faces today and still is not able to even start solving, in contrast with, e.g. the Caribbean region which has made successful efforts to make up a viable trans-national, trans-cultural, trans-ethnic and even trans-religious Caribbean identity. The political leftist discourse, fashionable in the last decades in the Western cultural-critical environment will not become popular in the post-Soviet region — for quite some time. At the same time, the old Soviet and even older Russian complexes of imperial superiority (Western-modeled, based on the myth of the European nature of Russian culture, civilizing "other", inferior nations) are still alive and unquestioned in the minds of many "intellectuals".

Post-Soviet material is not easy to classify within the usual, primarily British postcolonial schemes due to the versatile, many-sided development of cultural colonialist strategies in this area, connected with specific historical/cultural peculiarities and strategies of colonization in pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary times, corresponding to the curious double model (the Russian Imperial and the Soviet colonialist ideologies are mutually super-imposed), and once again demonstrating the impossibility of the absolutely universal theory of otherness.

In the post-Soviet cultural space literary sub-traditions can be generally described as still going through the boom of authenticity, characteristic of the postcolonial world literature in the 1960 — 1970s. The first to destroy this scheme have been the cross-cultural authors, who fall in-between the old Soviet assimilative



model and the national-ethnic authenticity one. Among them I would mention Andrei Voloss, the author of the "Anti-Booker" prize-winning (1998) novel *Khurramabad*, a Ukrainian post-modern writer Yuri Andrukhovich, who wrote a novelette *Recreations* (1991), a "former" Bakinian Afanasy Mamedov, the author of somewhat impressionistic Proustian sketches *Love and Make Mistakes* (2000). This in-between fiction, available to the Russian-reading public mainly through literary journals, still remains on the periphery of the attention of wider audiences, and not only in the ex-empire itself but in the ex-"colonies" as well, being inconvenient both to the politically engaged culturally extremist readers and to the Russian public, who is not yet able to get rid of imperial illusions and acquire the post-imperial tolerance that Britain has been lately so famous for.

The global polemics on "différance" coincides with the general turn from aesthetics to culture, the peak of which in the humanities came at about a decade ago. Negation of disciplinarity has led to rendering of literature and art mainly within the presumably democratic "cultural critical" frame, and consequently to a complete neglect and de-valuing of aesthetics, stigmatized as "elitist and outdated". Perhaps the time has come to somewhat shift back from "boundless" culture to aesthetics, certainly interpreted not in any normative way, for if we try to analyze the works of trans-cultural authors, we will have to keep in mind that literature is "self-validating", and any author should be judged by his books, not his passport or the political party he belongs to, not by the degree of his authenticity (Rushdie 1991: 67). Many international or "un-homed" writers demonstrate the essentializing nature of "authenticity", connecting it with the concealed, modernized form of (self)exotization that E. Said described back in 1978 as "orientalism". Among them there are such hybrids — "traitors" from the point of view of authenticity adherents — as Salman Rushdie and a British poet of Guyanese origin David Dabydeen, an American writer of Chinese descent Maxine Hong Kingston, a "Check French" Milan Kundera, and many others who are clinging to a temperate, hesitant, post-essentialist relativism in the vein of Bhabha and Said, and at the same time, create fearlessly innovative and fruitful in-between aesthetic models.

A critical approach free from the artificially narrow discourses of power and suppression, based on the rehabilitated aesthetics of a non-normative nature, largely fused with psychological-ontological characteristics, would be the most unprejudiced one, lacking the initially condescending or, to the contrary, aggressively self-proclaiming bent. Such a goal is hard to achieve, as it requires the scholar to be deft as a rope-walker and as double-faced as a Janus, able to apply the errant, migrant way of reading and interpreting the texts, struggling in the "cultural hotchpôtch", a post-national melange that Rushdie so colorfully describes in relation to Bombay (ib. 394).

It is important that practically none of the international writers wants to be called a postcolonial author, preferring instead such less value-based and politically-engaged categories as in-betweenness, un-home-le-ness, ethic-aesthetic hybridity, cultural "melange", as a positive meaning-generating synthesis, rejecting the essentialist, insulting hyphenated definitions, visibly demonstrating the painful split in their double selves (Indo-Anglian, British-Guyanese, Franco-Maghrebian, etc.). These new definitions are invariably marked with emotional-metaphorical overtones, as most postmodern "terms" are. The most widely spread of them is the unbelievably elastic "hybridity", actively discussed not only by Bhabha (Bhabha: 38, 127, 207-208, 242), but by a number of Latin-American "border theorists" (J. D. Saldivar, H. Calderón), and by the writers themselves. Rushdie in his collection of essays, deftly called *Imaginary Homelands*, baptized himself and similar writers, marked with an insuperable sense of loss and exile, a "world community of displaced authors" (15). This becomes not only a formal acknowledgement of their immigrant status, but also a confirmation of profound spiritual exile, metaphysical outsider-ness, under which, according to Rushdie, Günter Grass, James Joyce, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Milan Kundera and Maxine Hong Kingston could easily sign (ib.). These cosmopolitan people "root themselves in ideas, rather than places, in memories as much as material things" (ib. 124), they suspect reality and define themselves in spite of definitions imposed by others.

A terminological metaphor, offered by Rushdie to define this new "world literature", sounds seemingly even more offensive

than "hybridity" — "mongrel" literature (ib. 67, 69, 70, 394), but nevertheless correctly describes the essence of this specific contemporary state of mixing, transformation, hybridizing, denying the sterile absolutism of pure blood and culture. It is important to note the element of illegitimacy of these writings, that Rushdie insists on, its existence around, in spite of, beyond the generally accepted spatial-temporal and ethic-aesthetic coordinates, at the junctures of which the new meanings are being constantly created.

M. Bakhtin in his studies of historical poetics (e.g. in *Epic and Novel*) pointed out polyglossia (or heteroglossia) and the polyvalent nature of the new forms that are born at the margins of official, dominant, "high" literature, e.g. the novel, as a genre at first explicitly illegitimate and gravitating towards border, marginal characters and topoi. At the end of the 20th century this Bakhtinian rule acts differently, for deliberate marginality in all manifestations has become today a certain surrogate norm. M. Foucault transforms Bakhtin's "polyglossia" into a largely cultural concept of "heterotopia", though the essence remains the same, and Rushdie, echoing both Bakhtin and Foucault, speaks of certain areas of cross-pollination — trans-cultural and trans-lingual (ib. 69), pointing out that this impossible mixture of various traditions can be not only "ambiguous and shifting, but also highly fertile territory for a writer to occupy" (ib. 15).

Bakhtin's famous example of the interaction of Latin (non-native for many territories) and "barbarian", low languages, out of an illegitimate union of which such genre forms as novel came to exist, today is echoed in the similar "barbarization" of English that turned an international *lingua franca*, which is not interpreted by the modern generation of writers, connected originally with former British colonies, as the conquering tongue, and is no longer rejected indiscriminately, but rather re-made, re-interpreted, "domesticated", treated as only one of languages, no longer dominant, if we speak of objectively multicultural, multilingual areas, such as India. Rushdie, e.g. points out the non-marked nature of English for the generation of "midnight children", born at the end of colonial times and called so after his novel of the same name had been published, or we can use the example of Spanglish and "Calo" in Mexican-American fiction. Finally, a



good example would be the Caribbean tradition with its Creole English-es, born out of an impossible cultural/linguistic mixture of various ingredients. If before they existed mainly in oral, folklore forms, and later — in the so called "dramatic monologues", now they more and more often come into the spheres of written (as opposed to oral) and prosaic literature. A Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff juxtaposes fluent, rational, logical and unmistakably Western discourse of her dissertation on Italian Renaissance and the jagged, nonlinear, almost shorthand prose about herself as a subject, where the Royal English is fighting with colorful patois and Creole pigeons of her childhood, giving birth to temporal and spatial mixtures, genre and stylistic hybrids, ambivalent characters (Cliff 1988: 57). David Dabydeen experiments in equipping his own poems, written in Creole dialects, with unique self-translations, in a way mocking the would-be scholarly commentary to an "othered" text, making the impossible cultural translation, which centers between and beyond the Western rational analysis and emotional thickness and violence of the true words, spoken by the "mute" or the "un-born". That is why even in Dabydeen's dramatic monologues, following formally the Caribbean poetic tradition, there is always present a certain additional perspective, problematizing the act of cultural translation or linkage as such, alienating the genre of the dramatic monologue itself, assigning it not to a living person (a slave, a coolie), but to a drowned and half-decomposed slave's head, recollecting its past and dreaming of its future ("Turner").

Although theorists have generally agreed today on the negation of the partly romantic understanding of language, as a universal means of expressing the national character and holistic identity, this statement needs further concretizing in the direction of cultural-linguistic translation and linguistic hybridizing problematics. It is especially skilful in the case of truly postmodern authors, who have a Nabokovian, Joycean freedom of word/world-creation, who possess a sensitive ear, as Salman Rushdie does. Typical examples of his multilingual word-hybrids, which usually are toponyms and characters' names, include "Aurora Bombayalis", the almost Joycean "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain", "Lambajan Chandi-wala" — "Long John Silver-Fellow", endless toponymic hybrid

variations, concocted according to the principle of the palimpsest, that acts as a leitmotif in many Rushdie's books.

Rushdie, echoing Latin-American-centered theories of cultural translation as paraphrase, as bridging, that e.g. culturally extremist Chicana Gloria Anzaldua is so famous for, offers a characteristic explanation of the linguistic-discursive side of cross-culturalism in literature, carrying the act of translation inside the very writer's identity: "The Word "translation" comes etymologically from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in the translation. I cling obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained" (Rushdie 1991: 17).

The problem of the language choice is connected with the gravitation to this or that cultural model — assimilative, chronologically the earliest, archaic, that Latin-American scholars usually connect with the imagery of insurgent "Calibans", and finally, the hybrid model, under which the mastering and skilful use of an "international" language, what used to be the colonizer's tongue, gets to be connected with the process of liberation from both Western and authentic discourses. Such a hybrid model, marked with cosmopolitan, postmodern elements, allows the writers not only to enlarge their audience, but also to actively deconstruct the former dominant language from within, corresponding to the model of the double, split consciousness, a specific state of inner exile, giving a "stereoscopic" vision that has certain advantages in comparison with the holistic, unified positioning of both the archaic and assimilative modes.

A number of authors, mainly traditionalists or cultural extremists (e.g. the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, who turned to Gikuyu instead of English) think that the necessity of carrying out the de-colonizing struggle, using the very language-colonizer — narrows the authors' potential. Thence comes their often demonstrative refusal to use "dominant" English, returning to the native tongues instead. The demonstrative archaization of cultural/linguistic models, however, does not always equal the rejection of the aesthetic and poetic(ologic) models of the Western discourse. The same refers to the rejection of the Russian language that is predictably at its peak today in the whole post-Soviet area, where

the attitude towards the colonizer's tongue (Russian) has not yet been changed into a detached, objectified, and playfully creative one.

No matter what language the international writers choose, the result usually is Bakhtin's "heteroglossia", the trans-cultural Levi-Straussian bricolage, and the emphasis shifts from the skillful imitation of imperial English, French, Spanish, Russian to the countless ways of its decomposition from within, a demonstration of its rotten nature, as a part of the dying "body" of Empire, finally, efforts to give it a new potential by illegitimate "cross-pollination" and "hybridizing", subverting the dominant language — beyond recognition.

All that, however, does not mean that cultural models should be completely ignored when we analyze cross-cultural fictions, for there is a close relationship between aesthetics and cultural paradigms. At the basis of the contemporary artistic models of in-between-ness there almost always lie real multicultural geographic areas that due to a number of specific historical conditions, have been able to exist for a long time in a state of syncretism, organically combining various, often contradictory, elements. Such features are typical e.g. for India, or for the complex Caribbean culture. The idea of the culture-rhizome, having a mass of roots and lacking one main trunk, acting as a chaosmos of thousands of interconnected threads but not "structured" in any generally accepted way, and consequently, the aesthetics-rhizome, developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1976), and interpreted as one of the constitutive factors of postmodernity, is being realized in the artistic variants of trans-cultural topoi interpretation in literature and arts.

Political conceptualism and flat, two-dimensional aesthetics that have frequently been associated with postcolonial literature, are changing today to rather a wide, blurred specter of aesthetics, marked by the interaction of various cultural and national traditions. Here one can find anything — from traditionalism (as, e.g. in the works of an ex-Trinidadian Indian V. S. Naipaul or a popular Indo-Anglian author R. K. Narayan) to the toughest postmodernism, as in the works of Booker-Prize winners Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Michael Ondaatje, J. M. Coetzee and others.



The poetic devices of trans(inter)national literature, although they differ from one writer to another, can be interpreted by the means of specific optics of stereoscopic vision and creation of second reality under an angle to the real one. That is why they turn to alienation, various hybrid forms of the grotesque, connected with the technique of combination/collage, the use of the fantastic and hyperbolae, the creation of the topsy-turvy world, where self and other, native and alien are constantly changing places, to gigantic materialized meta-metaphors, to almost expressionistic distortion, to baroque stylistic abundance and sometimes deliberate virtuosity. International writers put in the center of their transgressive aesthetics certain fragile, but enormous structures of imagined mythic-poetic universes. The metamorphic, open, forever becoming nature of this literature, expressed on many levels, including characterization, linguistic and discursive models, often gives birth to original narrative forms, not always available or interesting to the "legitimate" literature. This refers, e.g. to the specific psychological dimension of this writing, often with a psychoanalytical bent, when the very concept of the postmodern, infinitely flexible, twinkling trickster is thoroughly deconstructed (Rushdie e.g. mockingly calls this a "mad/bad" opposition in 1995: 272). The metaphysical otherness of this fiction's subject leads to his painfully skeptical and shrewd interpretation of mass myths, stereotypes and misconceptions of today that are not usually rendered so keenly and objectively by individuals firmly rooted within a particular cultural soil. In the majority of un-homed books there is a pronounced shift to peculiar neo-subjection and to the rejection of the previously typical cultural-group emphasis and essentializing stereotyping in the form of the fake "vogue for peasantry" (Dabydeen 1994: 70). Their artistic worlds are keenly individual(istic), as well as the stories of their characters.

A number of "impossible" varieties of "others" that appear on the pages of trans-cultural writings is really unbounded: a drowned and half-decomposed head of a slave in Dabydeen's *Turner* — a manifestation of a voiceless subject, raped by Empire, or a no less colorful and impressive, literally realized metaphor of muteness in postmodern pastiche of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana* by J. M. Coetzee — *Foe* (1986). In post-Soviet fiction, still traditionally

inheriting the interest in the so called "small" person, often a "lumpen", different variants of "otherness" have been also transforming recently into such non-typical, forbidden, misinterpreted forms of marginality as lumpenized children and women, drug-addicts, mentally retarded, handicapped, sexually deviant persons, sometimes simply animals as "others", that are presented with no sentimentality, but with overtones of revenge, violence, cruelty, and are used as a new point of reference, alienating the whole world around that seems abnormal to them.

In most cases the hybrid model is organic for writers who had experienced colonial times only briefly, who were uprooted early enough, often pushing aside the discourses and values of authenticity, and who were introduced to the Western forms of interpreting otherness — such are Rushdie, Ondaatjee, Mukherjee, Dabydeen, Ishiguro and others. For them the unsteady border between "self" and "other", as well as various ethnic, cultural, religious borders — appear to be almost completely internalized, taken into an imaginary sphere, where the real (veritable) and the fictional (fake) are being constantly questioned and juxtaposed, into the realm of multiple interpretations, play on stereotypes and simulacra.

Who is the colonizer and who is the colonized is not always easy to tell today, as ever. Further questioning, alienation and overturning of the dichotomy "native/other" is characteristic of Coetzee's works and a number of British writers, exploring the fate of the ex-colonizer in the postcolonial world (India, Africa, Latin America, etc.). This problematics lies in the center of the posthumously published Albert Camus' novel *Le Premier Homme* (1994), finally, it is crucial for the latest novels of Nadine Gordimer. In *The House Gun* (1998), lacking the political engagements of her earlier works, Gordimer is interested in exploring the problem of existence *after* apartheid, and the dilemmas of the white man's consciousness, for whom the world around became suddenly turned upside down. For an elderly white couple — the main characters of the novel — this explosion and shift took place not only in the outer, but also in their inner, personal world. This new order of things is not interpreted by the author as ideal, rather it is the opposite, for the prevailing atmosphere remains that of

remote hatred, and structurally the text is based on the many times alienated and turned upside down metaphor of symbolic detention.

Trying to define the main aesthetic-ontological features of trans-national fiction, one would have to turn to the concept of the chronotope. The usual Bakhtinian chronotopes would have to be complimented with the meta-chronotope of "in-between-ness" — of nowhere and never, of permanent transit, which, I think, can be used as a basis for the study of trans-national hybrid fictions. Rushdie, pointing out the ontological-aesthetic, existential aspects of "mongrel literature", speaks of the "discontinuity of present and past for displaced writers, their being elsewhere" (Rushdie 1991: 12). Defining the possible territory of this literature, Rushdie says that "it will be bounded by frontiers which are neither political nor linguistic, but imaginative" (ib. 69). It seems that though undoubtedly theoretically vulnerable, Rushdie's effort to point out the imaginary nature of in-between territories, stressing the impossibility of transferring them into the spheres of economics, sociology, politics, at the same time appears to be the right key for the interpretation of not only formally postcolonial literature, but generally fiction, written by bi(multi)cultural authors. The more this or that book tempts us to interpret it as a political act or cultural manifestation, the more thoroughly should we try to interpret it in the literary, aesthetic, artistic, imaginary sense.

The chronotope of never and nowhere or a negative time/space, intersects with the older Bakhtinian chronotope of "threshold" or "border" (Bakhtin 1986: 280), connected with a certain critical existential moment while re-making and hybridizing a whole variety of other historical chronotopes, described by Bakhtin — from the novel of adventure to metamorphosis, from idyll to trickster, with the prevailing allegory of something similar to what African-American theorists usually call "signifying". Traces of these survival strategies are obvious in Caribbean, African traditions, and generally in all variants of ethnic-racial "passing". Tricksterism in the chronotope of in-between-ness can acquire unexpected reverse forms, as it happens in Voloss's *Khurramabad*. The prototype of this imaginary topos is the quite real Dushanbe, while Khurramabad itself is a hybrid, based on the contrast of blind othering cruelty of the stories, told by Voloss, and the



folklore toponym Khurramabad — a city of happiness, full of green trees, shade and generous people, borrowed by the author from Iranian and Turkish fairy-tales. By his cultural and linguistic origins, Voloss should have been a Russian variant of contemporary Kipling, but his subject is the time *after* the Empire, which leaves in every story of *Khurramabad* a persistent sense of decay, disintegration, the inevitable collapse of old values and stable points of reference — the native constantly swaps places with the other and the other takes the place of the native. Individual human life and destiny is not being generalized in any didactic way by Voloss, but, on the contrary, is further individualized and deliberately localized within the meaningless and cruel flow of history. One of the best stories in this cycle "The Native" (Voloss 2000: 98–135) is based on the problematics of signification. The author is trying to find out what lies behind the much discussed otherness — can it be reduced to appearance, to language, to customs or other specific, not always easily verbalized features of behavior, only to come to a helpless understanding of the irrationality of this category, especially, at moments of intensification of differences — civil wars, terrorism, revolutions, etc. The hero of "The Native", who is "passing for" a Tadjic, and idealistically wants to fight for the freedom and democracy of the nation that he thinks had become his own, really becomes a "native" only a few seconds before being killed in the world where everyone is an "other". In the Western tradition a "both-ways" metamorphosis had been "forbidden" quite early, acquiring a stiff, absolute nature, which is clearly seen in any variant of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Western grotesque, where disembodiment is final and carries no right of appeal. Most of the writers, oriented towards several cultural and aesthetic traditions, regain the shifty, non-absolute, fluid nature of metamorphosis, the specific flexibility of "connective tissue", making the process of embodiment/ disembodiment non-final again. Rushdie constantly points out the inherent nature of non-finality, of death/revival for *his* India. The same element is preserved in the archaic world *before* the white man's arrival in Dabydeen's *Turner*. The un-finished nature of metamorphoses is characteristic of Gloria Anzaldua, Audre Lorde, Bharati Mukherjee — i.e. the authors who are in this or that way

connected with traditional cultures. In the aesthetics of post-Soviet writers this principle of folklore-based, miraculous metamorphosis is usually hushed or lacking, being realized mainly in literary, fiction-based forms, as it happens in Andrukhovich's *Recreations*. It can be partly explained by a more profound and complicated rupture with the authenticity of the lost archaic culture and by the general orientation of these writers to the Western (or Russian classical) tradition.

The imaginary topos of trans-culturality is usually fairy-tale styled and fantastic, a made-up, alternative reality, often not even claiming objectivity, existing openly in the minds of in-between characters, narrators, authors. Here a number of examples would be infinite — from Rushdie's "Peccavistan" (*Shame*) and Babylon (London) (*The Satanic Verses*), in a way reproducing Nabokov's Amerussia from *Ada or Ardor* to Voloss's Khurramabad, from mythic islands — Carriacou (in Odre Lorde's *Zami*), Willow Springs (in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*) to an enigmatic country Dash — between India and Manhattan in Bharati Mukherjee's books, from Afanasy Mamedov's hybrid imaginary topos *between* his native Baku and forever alien Moscow (Rushdie would call this phantasmal hybrid world — *Bascow*) to Andrukhovich's Chertopol (literally — Devil-burg).

Among the recurrent topi in the works of these writers one can point out such stable, eternal, and at the same time metamorphic, shifting images as "cemetery" and "market-place". In *Khurramabad*, which literally starts at the cemetery, it will reappear more than once as a leitmotif of a contradictory connection with the past, with the alien land that had become native. In *Recreations* the secret cemetery — a place where a mass burial of the innocently killed "repressed" had been performed — ironically turns into a suspect pleasure house, built literally on people's bones. The market-place in *Khurramabad* has two images — a real market — the Oriental bazaar, coming directly from childhood, from fairy-tales, and the town square, which retains some of its initial characteristics, and adds new ones, connected with the diluted and distorted by communist ideology meaning of the ancient market-place. The image of the town square as a place for official orators' speeches, who inform the people of the important

events and decisions, coincides with the image of the square as a place of a possible massacre. The magic topos of Chertopol is also built on this reinterpreted playing on sacred and secular, church and carnival, life and death. The market place as the carnival in the spirit of Gogol's "Sorochinskaja Fair" here easily and quickly turns into a place of mass execution, almost realized.

Many trans-cultural writers have been influenced by Latin American magical realism — Márquez's Macondo turned out to be for them an almost unavoidable temptation. However the fantastic, "miraculous" element can vary according to concrete conditions, national cultures, countries, degree of association with Western and "traditional" artistic forms, specific aesthetic models, creating a whole variety of spaces — from extremely and deliberately secluded microcosms to no less extremely open, cosmic, boundless universes. The weaker the author's connection with particular culture(res), the stronger the element of invented-ness, artistic intentionality, when the writer freely plays on various cultural topi, re-making, re-thinking the fictional reality, distorting the angles under which it is positioned to the real world. There is a tendency to subjectivation, to gradually stronger isolation from any real locations, to the unprecedented, marvelous, ethereal nature of these imagined topi, which gradually leads the hybrid authors away from magical realism proper, with its still rather substantial degree of spatial stability and heavy materialness. Salman Rushdie's case is very important in this respect — he started with rather politically engaged and rooted-in-reality Peccavistan (*Shame*) and gradually came to such consciously utopian spaces as Palimpstine and Mooristan (*The Moor's Last Sigh*), existing entirely within the characters' minds, inside their split selves, and based on literary, mythic, rather than real overtones.

In the chronotope of "in-between-ness" time no longer plays the main part — it is almost completely subdued to the imagined space, the reigning topos. The spatial element of this chronotope can be defined as a marvelous-fantastic space "everywhere and nowhere" at once, while the highly relative and subjective temporal one is largely lacking "normal" duration. Subjectivation of "exterior" time leads to the utmost relativization of personal time, its arbitrary acceleration or (seldom) deceleration, sometimes a



condensation, when the “other” gets a chance to have several lives, however short and unhappy. In Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sign* the past does not exist in the distant part of the linear time model, but, on the contrary, dwells next to and simultaneously with the present. The fantastic Moor manages to squeeze 70 years into his given 35. Andrukhovich echoes Rushdie in his afterword to *Recreations*, characteristically called “May Night Dream” (a hybrid of Shakespeare’s and Gogol’s titles), defining the 1990s as “the time that in points of condensation of events equals certain centuries...” (Andrukhovich 2000: 56) The lyric hero of Dabydeen’s poetry, the main character of Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* (1991), the half-fantastic Moraes Zogoiby (Moor) in Rushdie’s book — all live out several lives, pressed into one considerably shortened physical existence, in accordance with Mukherjee’s fairy-tale-like words that her past happened many life-times ago.

A profoundly postmodern feature of most self-negating narratives based on chronotopes of “never and nowhere” is their painful and intense interest in the problem of simulation, fictionality, the correlation of reality and illusion, self and its many masks, the mythologization of reality and the reverse influence of myth on reality, the transformation of an idea into a stereotype, the destructive influence of the popular culture simulacra, the fluidity and shiftiness of “cultural authenticity”. Such authors as Rushdie or Ondaatjee, hard to place within any national literature, who have to reinvent many of the things that they did not have a chance to know personally, still inherit the specific feeling of the damaged, sieved past, that is firmly connected with the reality of their presents. Dabydeen expresses this specifically postmodern sense of the past as a text that is waiting to be written and thus is relative, variation-al, contextual — in his “Coolie Odyssey”, where the slippery concept of tradition and its questionable renderings is expressed in the image of the “library of graves”, where “ancestors curl and dry to scrolls of parchment” (1994: 73). Thus comes their realization that English is not only a compromise (negative), but also a hybrid (positive) way of self-expression, an act of translation of postmodernism into the language of postcoloniality, or, to use Bhabha’s metaphor, the formula of their existence is — “place — postmodern, time — postcolonial” (Bhabha 1994: 212).

They are openly cosmopolitan and postmodern in the utmost sense of complete "unbounded-ness", displacement as philosophy, lack of reverence for any truths and ideologies and lack of attachment to the "four anchors of the soul" (Rushdie 1995: 383), as Rushdie's Moor calls place, language, people and customs. In these unstable, displaced positions one can trace neo-universal ideas of world community, post-national "world literature" (Bhabha), circular tradition and "circular intellectual" (Said).

The migration chronotope or that of cultural "roaming" is usually a metaphoric way to salvation, a way to some miraculous reality, which turns out to be a "mirage intrigue", a vicious circle, *wandering* in the literal and figurative sense of various temptations and semblances. Julia Alvarez' alter ego character Yolanda Garcia is wandering on the once native Island in the depths of her personal and collective past. The normative world of her relatives is theatrical, "toy" reality for her, as a cake in the form of Dominica with sugar towns and custard roads, that her aunts ordered to celebrate her arrival. Wandering and deception in the marvelous topos lie at the basis of the characters' mal-adventures in *Recreations*. The evil, enchanted nature of the "other" world — Chertopol — with its highly subjective time and relative space — is defined as a "deception of place". The author abruptly cuts the depressing real(istic) reality of the still Soviet Russia from the wonderland, beyond-the-mirror fairy-tale-ness of Western Ukraine. Each of the characters faces his/her own existential adventure that changes their future life. Temptations of fame, carnal pleasures, revenge, finally, a direct parody of the major diabolic temptation at the improvised black mass — are all used as certain plot clusters — each with its own pronouncedly fictional mini-topos and a set of well-known literary works re-defined. Every character's theme is "conducted" in the way of a literary leitmotif, tradition, or writer — for Khomsky — the author's alter ego — it is Vladimir Nabokov, for Gritz and Nemiritch it is Gogol, and, for all of them it is Michael Bulgakov.

The highly unstable, subjective, symbolic concept of home/un-home-le-ness acts as a meta-metaphor in trans-cultural and aesthetically trans-gressive writings. A good example would be again the Caribbean post-national tradition with a pronounced urge to

“invent” new alternative geographies and locales with “creators”, who by the very act of (re)naming repeat the age-old custom of creating the world with the word, and is able in a perfectly post-modern way to invent a body and a biography, and to people the imagined landscape. (Derek Wallkott, David Dabydeen).

The interpretations of home/un-home-le-ness range from the split, symbolic “homes” of family, country, one’s divided soul in Rushdie’s “mongrel” characters to the “home” as an unattainable expression of stability, safety, serenity, sometimes, the last refuge, collapsing under the pressures of history, as it happens in *Khurramabad*. The topos of un-home-le-ness is often an attempt to find a retreat, a surrogate of non-existent home, which is attainable only on paper, in words. Alvarez, who found her “home” in the North-East of the US, deftly points out that any liberation from the past, any positive constructive activity can be achieved only in the sphere of words, in the textual collision, where the un-homed writer can finally re-territorialize. She describes this specific realm as a “*comunidad* of the word”, the only “place” where she was able to feel at home in America (Alvarez 1998: 39).

Closely connected with the interpretations of home/unhome-le-ness are various images of ex-empire (Dabydeen’s Britain, Voloss’s and Andrukhovich’s Soviet Russia, A. Meddeb’s and Camus’ France, or more symbolic and yet recognizable totalitarian/police states in the works of M. Kundera and J. M. Coetzee). It is often an absent image, an emptiness, still effecting everything that is going on in these books. In the interpretations of colonial pasts the in-between writers also use “meaningful silences”, when the global historical event, breaking many people’s lives, becomes an absent agent of a sort. Lacuna in place of rational explanation appears to be more effective than direct rendering of an event (K. Ishiguro in his “Japanese” novels deliberately avoids writing directly of the tragedy of Nagasaki which nevertheless structures the narrative; Rushdie does not mention the bloody events of the “division” of India and Pakistan, which still determine everything that happens in *Midnight Children* (1981).

Each of the authors chooses specific aspects of the empire imagery — Dabydeen speaks of the erotic and pornographic power of the Western empire, interpreting suppression by means of



sexual violence metaphors (such is his half-serious poetic dialogue "Seduction" between the modern Miranda and ex-Caliban). Russia in Voloss's interpretation is also an absent agent, an object of blind hatred or equally blind idealizing, turning into another alienated, "other-ed" space. Images of post-Soviet Russia are typically cruel, in a sense negating the in-between characters, spun by history, not being able to re-territorialize, finding themselves unwillingly in the position of hostages of empire, its persecuted messengers with no rights and with a lost mission. It is important to note the specific and deliberate declass   and lumpenized nature of Voloss's "pseudo-colonizers", which makes them similar to the heroes of the Algiers novels of P. Bowles, W. Burroughs, A. Camus, to say nothing of many degraded "sahibs" and "gringos" of post-British and Latin American prose. These marginals, finding themselves in the "other-ed", alien space are often even more negatively self-identified than the classical colonial subjects. For the autobiographical character of Camus' *Le Premier Homme* — a French boy, who lives in Algiers, a utopian image of unknown France — an imaginary homeland — is being considerably corrected in the course of the novel, making him finally reject the ready-made (self)definitions and stereotypes, which the colony has to offer, creating himself anew, becoming truly the first man, a new Adam, with no national mould. The characters' efforts to define themselves in these extreme situations of civil war (Voloss), nationalistic onslaughts (Rushdie), ambivalent and poignant post-apartheid existence (Gordimer, Coetzee) — are almost always bound to fail and end up in their personal tragedies and deaths. Thus the idyllic myth of Russia is destroyed in the last story of Voloss's book, with a meaningful title "Zavrazhje" (the etymology includes not only "ravine" — in Russian, "ovrag", but also an "enemy" — "vrag"), where the fairy-tale, dream-like, blurred imagery of Khurramabad gives way to almost naturalistic optics with cruel overtones, stressing once again that neither blood, nor religion or national identity is able to define the concept of "native", making the characters forever "others" in the drunken, destitute, ignorantly atheist Russia, giving an unfriendly welcome to her un-willingly prodigal children. Helen Tiffin's idea of "canonical counter discourse" (Tiffin 1995: 95–98) works in

*Khurramabad* not in the literary-aesthetic sense of inter-textuality or postmodern deconstruction, based on canonical texts, but rather in the cultural-ontological dimension, alienating a whole collective-unconscious image of an other(ed) culture. Thus, seemingly lacking value judgement, Voloss's text places itself into a silently polemic position toward wild chauvinism and intolerance toward the ethnically/religiously "other".

Trans-cultural, international, in-between fiction — one of the most independent and original manifestations of postmodern sensibility and aesthetics, definitely surpasses the unsatisfactory definition of postcolonial literature, and requires the development of a specific critical discourse for its interpretation, which should be made truly trans-disciplinary, by synthesizing the cultural-ideological and aesthetic frames. Into the center of such a study we can place the re-defined category of the chronotope, which I tried to sketch briefly in the essay, by means of the well-known concepts of "un-home-le-ness", "hybridity", "mongrelization", problematics of cultural-linguistic translation, re-conceptualized in the direction of further "aesthetization". The post-Soviet model of "in-between-ness", that has received practically no attention in postcolonial and cultural critical discourses, may become a fruitful area of analysis in the future, leading to re-interpretation of both postcolonial models per se, and such global concepts as "world (international) literature", that are going through a serious and yet unmatched period of re-definitions today.

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# Modern African Writers and the Challenges of Writing in African Languages<sup>1</sup>

ABDUL-RASHEED NA'ALLAH

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## Introduction

The debate about using indigenous African languages in writing is not new and I am not about to review the many submissions and counter submissions made for several decades, from Obi Wali's to Chinua Achebe's, from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's to Wole Soyinka's. However, some of the most exciting sessions in the language debate that I myself witnessed were at the 1997 African Literature Association annual conference at Austin, Texas. A huge audience repeatedly asked Chinua Achebe why an authentic African writer wouldn't jettison colonial language and adopt his mother tongue. He responded again that African writers had to make their own choices, and could only write in the language that they knew best, local or foreign. During another session, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was, practically spitting fire and declaring another war, pushing for the adoption of African languages by African writers. Achebe and Ngugi are giants of African literature and I might not be qualified to challenge their views. Nevertheless, their views impress upon Africa's march to socio-cultural and economic emancipation.

From reports coming from post-Abacha Nigeria, Chinua Achebe seems to have slightly changed his approach with recent rounds of public performances and lectures, speaking in the Igbo

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally presented at the International Conference on "Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the Twenty-First Century" in Asmara, Eritrea, January 2000.

language in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, Ngugi wa Thiong'o would no longer insist that writers in African languages are the only "genuine" African writers, given what seems to me an altered position from his Asmara address.<sup>3</sup> He had referred to their works as Afro-European literature (Amuta 1987: 112), and I wonder if he would say the same thing today.

Most of the following questions have been asked before, but I will ask them again here, as a parody for many defined agendas. Should African writers and critics of African writing leave the choice of language in their writing to the forces of nature? Should there be a declared African agenda? An agenda similar to *Presence Africaine's* and the Negritudists' (see Irele 1981: 67–88), where the motto would be "I am Black/African and I am writing in the African tongue. Whoever is not proud of his/her mother tongue is not fit to write." Or can we take the Tigritudist option, and say, "there is no need for the Tiger to proclaim its tigritude!"<sup>4</sup> In other words, can we over dramatize the issue of indigenous language writing?

The Yoruba people have a philosophy, cast in two different adages, and I will apply it here. It is that a debater or worker hits the nail right on the head, *bi ise o ba peni enikan kii pe'se*, and, *ibi pelebe laati mu oole je*. The first oral tradition insists that there is no need for a person to delay what is a straightforward case. The second prods: "start your discussion from the easiest and juiciest point." *Oole* is a Yoruba spice, and it tells a lot why the Yoruba rhetorician carefully chooses this metaphor.

There are three types of African writers, each according to the choice of language in his/her creativity. Sometimes, each of these categories is colored by the writers' polemics about their language choice. In other words, we can have a colored sentiment. The word

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<sup>2</sup> Reports from Nigeria indicated that Chinua Achebe, among a series of speeches since visiting home from the United States, wrote and gave public addresses in the Igbo language.

<sup>3</sup> My January 2000 conversation with Ngugi wa Thiong'O touched on this issue (Forthcoming publication).

<sup>4</sup> Soyinka gave this speech at a certain Scandinavian conference in 1967.

"colored" may be well known to the South Africans and the Americans. But, yes, we do have some "colored classes" in the African indigenous language debate, the superior/inferior argumentation. The three types are as follow:

- 1) Writers in Colonial languages, with strong foreign cultural backgrounds;
- 2) Writers with a mixture of foreign and African languages, usually poets who explore the oral tradition and blend it with contemporary or past African and European styles and thoughts; sometimes mixing African and European linguistic elements;
- 3) African indigenous language writers.

Each of these writers cannot claim ultimate superiority in literary creativity in Africa as each owes the African oral artists a huge debt for exploring from their modes and materials. The Yoruba culture, for example, has different kinds of oral poetry, narratives, and drama; thus, brands of oral artists who, either as professionals or freelancers, are bearers of their peoples cultures. Olatunde Olatunji and Ulli Beier give various classifications of Yoruba oral genres — *Ijala*, *rara*, *iwi egungun*, etc. (see Olatunji, Beier and Ogunjimi & Na'Allah).

It is often argued that Africans who write in colonial languages bring newness and freshness into their writing regardless of how much African cultural background or education they have had. The most familiar praise from critics is that this set of writers have enriched European languages by bringing into it traditional African metaphors and symbols. However, as Abiola Irele argues, their purported contributions to the European languages may actually be a mirage:

Our writers are carrying over into the European languages a whole stock of symbols derived from the African environment; it is difficult to judge whether, as has often been claimed, these European languages are in fact being truly enriched in the process. If we are to go by the example of Yeats, who abandoned his early efforts to differentiate his poetry through recourse to Irish mythology, we may well doubt whether the effort of our writers will turn out to have any significance to it. (Irele 1981: 54)



Whether African writers have contributed to European culture, or have enriched European languages with African language resources, it is important for African literary critics, and the general readers/audience of African literature to determine what is more important for themselves. Is it the laurels and gold medals African writers win abroad? Or is the gratitude of a successfully mobilized African population who, through spirited dialogue with the writers, are able to turn their lives around as Africans and citizens of the world? What is more important? Is it the African writers' contributions to foreign culture, or a creativity that helps in developing African languages and cultures?

Another reason some of these writers often give for using colonial languages is that they are able to reach wider and more cross-cultural audiences, especially in African countries where there are often many native languages. Some writers have, therefore, seen the European language as a neutral language, hence acting both as a unifying factor and a vehicle for a wider audience.

Modern African writers' choice to write in non-African languages, particularly the colonial languages, is a lazy choice. Virtually all those who insist on "foreign language and foreign language alone" usually give another reason, such as asserting they could write better in European languages, or that they couldn't write at all in their mother tongues. They claim they had missionary and colonial education and were never taught to write in an African language. They give this reason as if it is impossible for them to take some lessons in African languages. Yet, most of them, in studying for their degrees abroad, were forced by their universities to satisfy additional European language requirements. What is wrong with taking time off to acquire expertise in one's mother tongue? Without fear of being labeled an autocrat or called a person prescribing what African writers must do, I strongly believe that the glaring failures of African writers in the twentieth century have led African critics and audiences to dictate what they want to see from their writers.

Contemporary African writers have a huge indigenous tradition to learn from. Writing in indigenous languages in Africa predates colonization. Among the earliest writing systems were Egypt's Hieroglyphics, the Geez, the Arabic writing (*Ajami*), and many

others. These were popular in some parts of Africa. In Nigeria, for example, indigenous language writing in Arabic script started as far back as the 11th century. It expanded through Borno, Sokoto, Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Ilorin, Oyo, and many Yoruba parts of Nigeria (see Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah, forthcoming). Enormous amount of literary and religious work has been produced in *Ajami*.

With colonization and the introduction of the Roman script, indigenous language writers sprang up from all parts of Nigeria, especially in areas where orthographies were developed for the indigenous languages. These include Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Nupe, Tiv, Ijaw, and so on. In most of the instances, the use of the Roman script in an indigenous language started with the translation of the Bible. The indigenous language writing development in Nigeria is perhaps similar to its development in other parts of Africa. Northern and Eastern Africa have a much more sophisticated tradition of native script and native language writing, and the development of the Geez script is a good example. In the words of Albert Gérard, the indigenous language writing has actually been a great blessing to African cultures:

In their nascent state, the vernacular literatures of Africa contribute powerfully to the spread of literacy. As they swiftly mature they help their readers towards more sophisticated awareness of their own experience, emotions and values. With such gifted writers as Thomas Mofolo in Sotho or D. O. Fagunwa in Yoruba, they have already provided models for major aesthetic achievements that will convey the specificity of African cultures. Clearly several African societies have managed to eschew the "glot-tophagic" process that affected Western autochthonous cultures under the Romans. (Gérard 1990: 21)

Other examples of important contributions to African indigenous language writing were the translations and adaptations into Swahili by Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, and into Hausa by Abubakar Imam in Nigeria.

Whatever the achievement in indigenous language writing, it is a drop in the ocean to what, in my view, would still accrue to

Africa if most of the current non-African language African writers would write in the African languages. The level of their expertise in foreign languages, and the honor their works have won for them abroad are examples of the kind of energy they could bring into African language literature. Again, let me invite Gérard's view:

Many writers throughout Africa have achieved uncommon control of Western languages. Wole Soyinka's Nobel prize could have been awarded with equal justice to several Europhone authors [Gérard's name for non-indigenous language African authors]. In fact the linguistic-literary conquest of the continent marks the acme of the phased expansion of Western languages to planetary proportions; the next stage, if any, can only be extra-terrestrial! In the perspective of world literature, it is Africa's specific contribution that in a mere half-century she has produced a double corpus of imaginative writing: in vernacular and in exogenous languages. (ib. 22) [parenthesis mine]

Gérard submitted further that "a far larger proportion of African poets, playwrights and novelists have chosen English as their literary mediums than has been the case in Southern Asia" (ib. 21). We must note that Gérard has not included in his statistical calculations African writers in French, Portuguese and in other non-African languages.

### **Writing in African Indigenous Languages: The Challenge**

A Yoruba saying *Baa leni baa bani, aa dena lehin eni ni*, meaning that when we pursue a person and could not catch up with the person, we stop pursuing. Throughout the twentieth century, thousands of African writers pursued popularity and a wider audience through European languages. They would never write in their mother tongues, or in any African indigenous language. Up to the start of the twenty-first century, over ninety-seven percent of them are neither popular nor able to reach audiences outside a few



classrooms. They had hoped to mobilize Africans and effect changes in the Africans' sociopolitical lives. They had hoped that through their critical comments, their satires, and sometimes hard-hit direct criticisms, they would effect changes in Africa, or perhaps, help shape the perspectives taken by the African leaders. After many decades of European language writing, African writers ended up producing elitist literature. Apart from the few elites at home only a few campuses abroad use their books. Modern African writers have chased after success and have not caught up with it. It is time to change strategy. It is time they came back home, to the source and medium of African culture, to African indigenous languages, to reach a greater African audience.

The challenge of writing in African indigenous languages in the twenty-first century is beyond any twentieth century rhetoric. Neither Obi Wali nor Ngugi wa Thiong'O is responsible for the powerful wave we are about to witness. Up to the end of the last century, there was very little evidence of success, in terms of people's mobilization and positive cultural enrichment that we could discuss in Africa. Yet, Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want*, written in Gikuyu, almost achieved this feat before the writer was jailed, and the play was banned in Kenya. Africa is still the starving, poverty-ridden, and in more hardships today than decades ago. Neo-colonial influences on African leaders grow by the minute, and more than ever before, Africa is indebted to foreign banks and governments. The culture of alienation of the African people started by the colonial imperialists and continued by the post-1960 African leaders, is indirectly being justified and held up by the African writers who continued to use foreign languages, and foreign languages alone, in their writings. The so-called national cohesion brought about by the continued use of European languages as official languages in many countries of Africa only succeed in keeping African masses outside government and maintaining the mysticism created around political leadership by the colonial masters. In a country like Nigeria where there are about 400 languages, people are often told that English will maintain national cohesion. In reality, what it has done is alienate common Nigerians from their leaders!

In his very strong comments on what he calls the language question in Africa, Chidi Amuta has the following suggestions:

The problem of communication in our literature is directly related to the forces that prevent human communication at the economic and social levels. As part of the struggle to correct this anomaly, all the avenues of cultural communication should be explored to get the benefit of progressive revolutionary literature across to the greatest possible majority of our peoples. In this respect, European languages, African languages, oral performances, written expression, radio broadcasts, etc, are implicated. (Amuta 1987: 113–114)

The African literature experience has to be holistic. I strongly support Amuta's idea as expressed above. Every African writer should use African languages, and the same writers may write, in addition, in European languages. But writing alone may not achieve the desired result — oral performances are necessary to carry indigenous language literatures to the grassroots. As Kofi Anyidoho once called for, there should be a greater respect for, and interaction with, African oral artists, to carry indigenous language writings to the masses. African writers can form coalitions with oral artists, and encourage oral artists to use their work, and the ideas they formulate, as materials for public oral performances.

All Modern African writers should consider the following suggestions because their drums must learn to use the right songs for advertising in the market before market gates close on them. If contemporary African writers must continue to be relevant into the twenty-first century, in my opinion, they must:

- a. write in African languages, and may continue to write as well in any colonial languages of choice;
- b. make the following their primary objectives:
  - 1) reaching out to more African audiences;
  - 2) enriching Africa's own cultures, like broadening the sophistication of African languages, and creating writing orthographies for more African languages;

- 3) encouraging dialogues among African languages and cultures;
- 4) encouraging translation among African languages;
- 5) encouraging dialogue between African language and non-African languages (through continued translations, adaptations, etc.

Writers who have never written in their native languages before must prepare for some difficulties when they start writing in their mother tongues. As they ask questions of themselves, they must provide themselves with answers. The following are examples of the challenges they may face:

- 1) writers must first decide in what African languages to write, in their own mother tongues, or in regional/national native lingua franca? For example, will a Luo or Gikuyu Kenyan write in their mother tongue, or in Swahili, their national/official language?
- 2) in what dialect of the language should they write? Should they use standard dialect, if their chosen language already has a standardized orthography;
- 3) what oral performance mode would they adopt?
- 4) what new performance modes should they introduce?
- 5) how will they attain literacy in their native language if they haven't got this ability before?
- 6) how would they get published?
- 7) what is best way to take their works to their people even after writing?
- 8) how to survive in the face of their society's biting poverty and lack of monetary profit from writing?

The African language writer must face these challenges head-on. He or she needs to be innovative, and to adopt the attitude of: "I won't give up." There is no clear-cut solution to any of these difficulties. I believe that the writers must adopt solutions that will help their specific purpose as new-comers to African language writing. Some writers may have to create their own working orthography if no orthography previously existed for their chosen languages. Tanure Ojaide, a Nigerian poet who has recently<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Personal interview with Tanure Ojaide, January 2000.



decided to write in Uhrobo, his mother tongue, has to design a working orthography for himself. Although many people have written in Uhrobo before, there is no standard orthography for the language. Literary works must be written in the writer's native dialect. As I have argued elsewhere (see "Introduction", *Almajiri*), literature loses its originality and identity when a writer's original dialect of thought is suppressed in favor of a so-called standard dialect. It is like asking an American to write in British or the Australian dialect. There is no such thing as standard dialect in literature! The dialect is an aspect of literary identity, and shows the uniqueness of a writer.

African writers have a rich oral heritage to explore. As already argued, they cannot depend on writing as a sole forum to convey their messages to their people. Most African people still depend on oral performance for cultural and literary expressions. Adopting the public oral performance should not be a second thought for an African writer. The only question is whether writers themselves want to be oral performers, or they want to collaborate with professional African griots to perform their works for them. African language writers may invent new performance modes or use already existing performance patterns from their communities. Their people will easily relate to works in well-known community modes. In cases where African writers introduce new and qualitative performance patterns, they will have no problem because of a high demand for literature among Africans. Indigenous African language writers cannot afford to isolate the traditional oral performer in their communities. That is the only way they can reach the grassroots of their communities. Wole Soyinka is better known among his Yoruba ethnic group not because of being a writer or winning the Nobel prize in literature, but because he participated in his people's struggle at the grassroots against a set of draconian Nigerian military regimes. After the Nigerian elections of 1999, Soyinka, like Chinua Achebe, repeatedly returned to Nigeria to address public forums.

Yet, Soyinka is more likely to be even more popular among his people if he were to write indigenous language literature and perform at market squares. Writers who are unable to write in their mother tongues must start to learn how to write in their languages.

As I already explained, many African scholars learn additional European languages when they go on research trips to Germany or Italy, or take degrees from overseas universities. Every African writer can be literate in African languages if he or she truly committed to learning them. Wole Soyinka translated D. O. Fagunwa's *Igbo Irunmole* into English and is deeply literate in his mother tongue. Soyinka's excellent translation shows what we can expect if he writes in his own Yoruba novel or drama.

All the debates about African renaissance (see my paper "Moving Africa Forward: from Alienation to Participation") will only be useful to the continent if grassroots Africans are involved, and if they are allowed to initiate their own process of renewal and rebirth. Contemporary African writers have a strong role to play in mobilizing the African people through African languages. The following are among the exciting results we may expect in a future vibrant indigenous language writing culture in Africa:

- 1) a phenomenal growth in literacy in indigenous languages throughout Africa;
- 2) African languages without orthographies could soon have them as writers use their mother tongues;
- 3) more vigorous education and mobilization will happen in Africa;
- 4) new oral and written performance modes will be created, new words coined, and indigenous language vocabulary enriched;
- 5) increased cross fertilization of ideas and concepts between African and European languages on one hand, and among African languages on the other as translations increase in both ways;
- 6) a strong reading and writing culture will gradually evolve;
- 7) oral artists and African writers will form alliances.

## Conclusion

If contemporary African writers take up this challenge, Africa will enter an exciting era of indigenous language writing. Although this is long overdue, the gains from a vigorous African language writing tradition will compensate for the delay. Economic, politi-

cal and cultural issues must be at the center of indigenous language writing. What many decades of colonial language literature could not achieve in Africa, a short time of indigenous language writing will accomplish. Writers constantly under the night cover of European languages can emerge in African day-break and speak heart-to-heart to their own peoples. With socially relevant works such as Ngugi's *Ngaahika ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* in all parts of Africa, African writers are more likely to succeed in mobilizing Africans for progress and development.

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# When Does a Literature Exist?

JOSEP CARLES LAÍNEZ

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## 1. Introduction

The analysis of contemporary literatures in European minority languages is no doubt one of the most embarrassing issues for current scholars. Whether we are writing a cursory survey of recently published books, or an in-depth study of the matter, one question arises: When does a literature exist? Or in a more particular context: Why can we affirm that Aragonese (or Catalan, Occitanian, Welsh...) literature exists today? Obviously, it is not my purpose to outline a division of literature written in some minority language into historical periods (cf. Laínez 1999), nor to draw conclusions regarding the long centuries of creative emptiness, but to reflect on what happens when the structures that normally support a literature fall apart.

We are currently seeing an increasing interest, on the part of critics, in research into universal (and domestic) canons. In the wake of numerous congresses and articles on the benefits of multiculturalism and the need for a degree of equality in literary works attributable largely to the influence of postcolonial studies, a not insignificant amount of attention is now being paid to literature as an art and as an expression of a particular kind of relationship between language and society. Literature, then, is not all the works written in a particular language, but the works which, due to their excellence, are capable of the following: 1) they affect and change readers; 2) they develop the language; 3) they influence writers (Bru de Sala 2000). These three characteristics cannot be separated from one another and always go hand in hand.

The question, however, is whether works written in a minority language have the same characteristics. In the more limited sense, the answer is yes. However, if we look at the question in a more general sense, we are forced to stray into other fields of study and our final conclusion is that the answer to the question is no. But I am getting ahead of myself. Let us begin at the beginning.

A process is taking place within the movements currently supporting the development of Europe's minority languages that may lead to any positive changes benefiting only those within the community or, to be more specific, the group promoting the language. It cannot be denied that trends and new developments in literature tend to affect only a select group of literary specialists, even in the case of major languages, and that the vast majority of the population remains unaffected by them. In the case of marginalized literatures (or *literary norms* as I shall call them) there is no final transfer to society as a whole. Thus, the three characteristics listed above affect only the group promoting the language and literature in question. This is especially true where promotion of a minority language takes place within the context of nationalist claims (Occitania, Brittany, Aragon, etc.), since the majority of the population have very little and at times no knowledge whatsoever of the language of the area they live in. This point is central to an understanding of minority languages in Spain and France and is the basis for our contention that no *Literature* of Europe's minority languages exists. This is not to say that various *literatures* do not exist, but rather that works written in any of Europe's minority languages cannot be analysed, organised or examined using the patterns traditionally applied to the languages we refer to as "major" languages.

## 2. Form and Functions of a *Literary Norm*

Any critic must recognize that the domain of a minority language is not comparable to the much larger domain of a State language. Nevertheless, the search for similar features applying to both is a task frequently undertaken by scholars of literature. Some years ago, in an article published in Catalan (Láinez 1999a), I argued, to

take a specific case, that there existed three *literary norms* in Aragon. In fact, Aragon is a country where three different languages are spoken: Aragonese, Catalan and Spanish. I argued that researchers must not adopt a similar approach (whether based on the region's history, on the geographical area to which the languages belong or on the quality of the texts) in dealing with works in these three languages. I proposed the following classification method (translated here from the Catalan original): AUnLN, NULN, and NUnLN. The first of these labels refers to the Aragonese language: an *autochthonous* but *unusual* literary norm (these concepts are defined below). The language is *autochthonous* because it is the only language that has belonged the Kingdom of Aragon from its very beginnings. It is *unusual* because it is now used by only a very small number of writers and spoken by a minority in the context of the country as a whole (11%). NULN refers to the Spanish language. Spanish is a *non-autochthonous* language, which was not used in Aragon until the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries and even then did not express the purest essence of this ancient Kingdom. Nevertheless, Spanish is now the most widely spoken and, therefore, *usual* language in the area. Finally, NUnLN is used to refer to Catalan in Aragon. Catalan is an *unusual* (11% of Aragonese speakers), *non-autochthonous* language (though current speakers are attached sentimentally and regionally to Aragon, it is indubitable that they belong primarily to Catalan culture). This leaves one label with no actual language on which to place it. The classification AULN refers to a language which is both *autochthonous* to the area in which it is spoken and *usual* in its development and cultivation. This definition could be used to describe Spanish in Spain or English in England, but is not the case of any language in Aragon. Though the connection was not made in the above mentioned article, it is important to notice that this last set of features corresponds to what we understand as *Literature*. This immediately raises the question that I shall try to answer below (Does Literature exist in Aragon?).

*Literature* or *Literary Norm*? I begin with a supposition: it is not possible to analyze literary works in minority languages with the same tools used for State languages. This does not mean that



minority languages rank below what are sometimes called the great languages. Rather, that their internal characteristics and their history, which, in the majority of cases, includes something very close to cultural genocide, places them in a very disadvantaged position. To compare them with other languages would, therefore, be self defeating if we are to create a comprehensive overview wherein the quality and quantity of works can be analyzed according to the relevant parameters. It should not be forgotten either that any taxonomy is only a network where the main features of minority languages are deduced from a wide range of characteristics, not all of which are common to all languages. I shall, therefore, restrict my comments to European languages since a general analysis of all the world's languages would be a major, perhaps even an impossible task. In fact, this paper deals solely with languages spoken in Spain, which has undergone a unique process of change, particularly with the arrival of democracy in the last thirty years of the twentieth century.

A *Literary norm*, as I suggested earlier, is simply a "literature" created in a European minority language. I have identified seven main features that can help us to describe it: Diglossical, Politicized, Out-of-Market, Endogenous, Allophonic, Decadent, Unofficial. All of these features are present in Aragonese, our starting point for this essay.

*Diglossical.* With few exceptions, most European languages are not viewed by their speakers as being on an equal footing with languages that have the support of the authorities and the administration. Minority languages are not considered high culture. Though a language may have been important in the past and may have a venerable literary tradition, in modern society there are some instances in which a local language will not be treated in the same way as an official one (mass media, church, school, writing, etc.). In short, the feature that serves us as a starting point is "diglossy", but a diglossy that goes beyond embarrassment or lack of respect. It is the feeling that one's own language is not good enough to be used anywhere and everywhere. A feeling of having been subjected to a process of acculturation is created in the speaker. Let us not forget that the postcolonial approach, which was fashionable in the study of African and Caribbean literatures,

could also be used to analyze European minority languages. A language does not become a minority language due to an internal process, but because of a set of external causes. Amongst such external causes are political control exercised by a foreign entity over an ancient State (as, for example, in the cases of Spain with regard to Aragon and Valencia, France with regard to Occitania, Brittany and Corsica, England with regard to Ireland and Scotland and Italy with regard to Padania, that is to say, in the Western States with the largest concentrations of minority languages that conquered other territories, which are now being reclaimed) and the resulting persecution of non-official languages.

*Politicized.* Along with "diglossy" goes the concept "politicized" in the broader sense. While the term "diglossical" is, to a certain extent, aseptic, the term "politicized" has a series of characteristics that allow a more contemporary approach. Minority languages are not accepted by all speakers as simply a communication tool. They have a set of added connotations which help language renewal movements to influence society. The politicization of languages covers a wide spectrum of trends and mechanisms used to exclude certain sectors of society for their lack of loyalty to the language. In Europe, renewal movements are attached to what has traditionally been termed the left wing and the main feature of their development is that there always exists a mistrust towards other players not belonging to the group. This takes us a step further to the claim that politicization may lead to a degree of class prejudice. An author's work is less important than the willingness of what we may call the "language class" to accept it.

*Out-of-Market.* The market does not exist for a literary norm. The limited number of works published are distributed using methods other than the normal book marketing process. With the exception of some booksellers, who receive works directly from the publisher (where the work is not published by the author him or herself), the common run of bookshops do not keep works the general public would consider exotic or, still worse, extravagant in stock. Furthermore, the usual ways of bringing a book to the public's attention such as publicity, interviews with the author, reviews and so on are little short of forbidden to authors in

minority languages and translation into the major languages is unthinkable.

*Endogenous.* Closely related to the fact that literary norms exist outside the market is their endogenous nature. We are dealing here, not only with a "language class", but also with a class that consumes primarily its own output or that of similar classes (i.e. other minority language groups). Thus, works intended for the group's own consumption and whose primary aim is to be quoted are created. Despite the marginal nature of works written in unofficial languages, a barely disguised interest in going down in a particular History is often in evidence.

*Allophonic.* Minority languages are, in general, made up of a number of dialects, which are sometimes quite different from one another. Depending on the country where the renewal is taking place, we may come across the creation of a *koine* or the development of several different dialects into a written form. It is no accident that in countries such as Italy or France priority is not given to endowing minority languages with an accepted spelling system and a minimum consensus on a common grammar. In countries such as Spain, however, where Catalan, Galician and Basque have achieved official status through regulation and then normalization, minor languages such as Aragonese or Asturian attempt to achieve the same status with similar tools. Nevertheless, most dialects have been considerably hispanized and the fact that so few people speak them means that many of the writers and language activists who choose them as their literary language do not speak them as a mother tongue. This is particularly true in the case of Aragon, though other emotional, political and aesthetic factors tend to compensate for this weakness.

*Decadent.* This term is intended to refer to periods of literary abnormality in history. None of Europe's minority languages has escaped long periods of decadence in terms of its cultivation and development. Invariably, it is the introduction of a foreign language that leads to progressive loss of literary mainstream status in the future minor language. In the major languages, on the other hand, it is hard to find decades or centuries where literary output was not of a certain dignity and quality. Not only are these periods



of decadence historically important, they also affect the future shape of the literary norm or canon.

*Unofficial.* This feature does not necessarily apply to all minority languages. In the case of the Spanish State, for example, there are three official languages besides Spanish, though the attitude of the institutions and public assistance suggest these languages are not held in particularly high esteem by speakers, especially if they have been subject to political persecution and self-hate merely for speaking the language they speak. However, in the case of Spain (as in the shameful cultural genocide that has taken place in France) there are two other languages (Aragonese and Asturian) that do not have official status and have suffered from the fact that academics have traditionally considered them dialects of Spanish, which is a serious linguistic error. Attaining official status would not solve these problems immediately. Nevertheless, it is vital to reversing a process that has endangered the language and putting it on the road towards normality. In fact, we would suggest that change from *literary norm* to literature begins (or has a very important point of reference) with the rise of an unrecognized language to a position from which it can enter the corridors of power and knowledge.

### 3. Conclusions

These, then, are the seven characteristics that define what we call a *literary norm* as opposed to a traditional Literature. Some of these features raise other questions that are of equal importance when analysing the phenomenon of literary works written in certain minority languages — the question, for example, not of when a literature can be said to exist but of why it exists, that is to say, what makes an author write in a language that has no access to cultural channels and which is not his or her mother tongue? And what is more, to create a political and cultural movement aimed at rescuing that language from obscurity. It should be clearly understood, however, that this is in no way an attack on attempts to restore their dignity to Europe's minority languages (attempts I am myself involved in, I should point out). Rather my intention is to

delve deeper into the epistemology of language marginalization with a view to uncovering the secrets of a phenomenon that affects thousands of people and that has brought forth Literatures once again in the dogmatic, qualitative sense of the canon I referred to initially.

Clearly, the concept of the literary norm is not intended to entirely replace the term "literature" in discussions of literary works written in Europe's minority languages. It is, however, intended to make us aware that we are dealing with a special case, as with my work on the mass media in Aragonese [cita], to remind us that the tools we use to study it should not be taken from the major languages, thereby ignoring the effects of a language's particular history. Thus, the usual division of European culture into the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-classical, Realist and Avant-garde periods is not reflected in the literatures of Europe's minor languages. Attempting to find examples representing these periods only highlights the poverty and fragility of these literatures. In most cases, particularly where France and Spain are concerned, one would be lucky to find anything more than a few works that serve as testimonies to the existence of the language from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century.

I would like to end with a few comments on the term "testimonial literature". In the division I proposed and use for literature in Aragonese, I refer to twentieth century literature in dialect as testimonial literature, that is to say, as literature by writers with no knowledge of the art of writing and non-allophonic command of the language. A wide range of different types of work can be classed under this heading. They include poetry and short pieces of prose, which are popular in style and structure, are far removed from high literature and were intended for the enjoyment of local people. In the very sad history of Aragonese literature, repressed throughout the twentieth century, these few works scraped together in the face of near total oblivion were a testimony to the existence of the language itself. It should be noted that we have now taken one more step downwards on the ladder of definitions of literary works: from Literature to Literary Norm and finally to the Testimonial to Language. This was the sorry state into which Aragonese letters had fallen until the Renaxedura (Renaissance) of the

nineteen sixties. We have taken a step up from there, though we are now in danger, due to the current world situation (globalisation, standardisation and other current commonplaces), of getting stuck not only as a “minority language” (a questionable term for such languages as one need only think of Icelandic, Finnish and Estonian to realise) but as a marginal language. Were this to remain the case, the literature of the future would be testimonial literature, as many literary works are now, more of a swan song than the starting point for a recovery. But this is to go beyond the scope of this article. As students of literature, we can describe only the present — a present in which the term Literature is clearly out of proportion to the real state of affairs. Let us hope that the future will bring a golden age for the literatures of Europe, an age when they can do without the label “minor”.

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## **Hybridity and the Popular-Democratic Character of South African Resistance Literature**

**PRIYA NARISMULU**

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A literature is being born in the process of social crisis and political change. We should be able to say: we were here; and this is how we were (Gwala 1989: 71).

The resistance struggle in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by the development of a culture (and a literature) of self-expression on the part of the people anticipating and working towards a liberated society. Since cultural activity did more than just accompany or reflect the liberation process, this has been a reciprocal and dialectical relationship. The term “popular-democratic literature” construes the resistance literature of the 1970s and 1980s as expressing an entire (and quite diverse) social movement to end oppression and transform society.

As a conjunctural construct located between politics, society and art, the popular-democratic embodies the hybrid character of the South African resistance movement, while representing the ways in which different formations coalesced around the attainment of a democratic dispensation. The construct of the popular-democratic also represents a counter-hegemonic process, as collective forms of organisation were used to challenge established structures.

In the early 1970s the Black Consciousness Movement tried to challenge the structure of oppression by building unity among oppressed South Africans who opposed apartheid:

We must resist the attempts by protagonists of the bantustan theory to fragment our approach. We are oppressed not as individuals, not as Zulus, Xhosas, Vendas or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black. We must use that very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group (Biko 1988: 113).

Black Consciousness (BC) represents a dialectical moment in the political and cultural development of the liberation struggle in South Africa, when oppressed people reconfigured the crude "ethnic" and "racial" concepts that the regime had constructed to divide them. In Sipho Sepamla's poem "My Name Is" (1975: 44) the speaker challenges the racial constructs that were used to reinforce the power of the ruling minorities and instead affirms identities that were more appropriate and meaningful to oppressed people across the country. In a society based on ascription the recognition that identity could be constituted rather than imposed was significant:

fed in phrases

Coloured

Kaffir

Native

Bantu

African

And now a furious Black

Modidi waSeshego

[Poor man of Seshego]

Qaba laseCofimvaba

[Illiterate of Cofimvaba]

Say my name is:

Makhonatsohle or

[He who is capable]

Mayenzwintandoyakhonkosi [Let your will be done Lord]

Let them know the name

It's been gone too long

Sepamla's speaker represents a strategic answer to critical questions raised by Armand Mattelart about the subaltern:

How, from their historically defined positions, can classes, groups and individuals without the official "word" fight against the dispossession of being able to define their own identity, create and imagine another form of uniting amongst themselves, and relating to others? In short, how can they become the often contradictory bearers of another way of thinking about and improving democracy? (Mattelart and Siegelau 1983: 17)

The BC, and later African National Congress (ANC), activist Wally Serote addressed such challenges in a variety of ways. In the poem "City Johannesburg" (1972: 13) the speaker challenges the might of South Africa's largest city by referring pointedly to the oppression upon which it has been built. The framing lines of the poem are significant. "City Johannesburg" begins as follows:

This way I salute you:  
My hand pulses to my back trousers pocket  
Or into my inner jacket pocket  
For my pass, my life,  
Jo'burg City

The poem concludes with:

Jo'burg City, you are dry like death,  
Jo'burg City, Johannesburg, Jo'burg City.

The poem is an ironic panegyric (praise poem) that draws upon the indigenous oral praise tradition to challenge the oppression upon which the wealth of the most powerful city on the continent has been built. African workers had no place in the city once they expended their daily quota of labour. A battery of legislation, including Influx Control laws and the Pass laws, as well as curfews all conspired to shunt African workers to the far-flung and poorly serviced dormitory townships. In the opening lines, the poor and harrassed worker has no "Bayete!" (the Zulu praise that acknowledges the powerful) in response to the authority of the apartheid police officer. Either the worker produces a permit or he will be imprisoned and then deported to the rural "homeland". The framing lines of the poem are ironic. Although mimicking the praise form, the lines signal an



inversion of praise, i. e., criticism, from people who had been turned into strangers in their own land.

Despite the activities of resistance organisations and the trade union movement in the 1970s the apartheid state remained powerful and obdurate. Many BC activists, including Steve Biko, suffered repeated harassment and detention. Biko was tortured to death by security police in September 1977, a fate that befell a number of activists. Many poets, like Serote, Mtshali, Gwala and Nkondo wrote poems challenging the frequent deaths of activists in detention, participating energetically in what Mattelart describes as an "unequal, but dialectical, exchange with the dominant cultural grid with its norms, values, models and signs connected to ruling power" (Mattelart and Siegelaub 1983: 17). Chris van Wyk's poem "In Detention" (1979: 45) challenges the power of the state by deconstructing the casual excuses made by the security police:

He fell from the ninth floor  
 He hanged himself while washing  
 He slipped from the ninth floor  
 He hung from the ninth floor  
 He slipped on the ninth floor while washing  
 He fell from a piece of soap while slipping  
 He hung from the ninth floor  
 He washed from the ninth floor while slipping  
 He hung from a piece of soap while washing

Performed at mass meetings and political rallies in the 1980s, this poem clarifies the location of the popular-democratic literature in the conjuncture between politics and art. In October 1977 all Black Consciousness organisations were banned and many activists were imprisoned, banned, killed or driven into exile.

Despite the severe repression of the late 1970s the powerful poetry was not silenced. In exile, the ANC activist Sankie Nkondo produced a powerful poem, "The Bivouac" (1990: 64–6), which expresses deep confidence in historical identity. This is demonstrated through her speaker's flamboyant license with geography and historical facts and figures. Showing that all readings are enriched or limited by the subject positions of writer and reader in the field of

ideological struggle, Nkondo's poem challenges the postcolonial reader to engage in the construction of meaning:

It is good for them  
to know who I am  
I am Bambata on Cetswayo  
related to Nghunghunyana  
cousining Moshoeshoe  
to converge on Isandhlwana  
and bivouac at Voortrekkerhoogte  
but the pigmentation hatchet men  
insist that I am confused indeed  
Vendaland by Ciskei is my home  
the rest is forbidden ground  
But I know who I am  
I know and feel my roots  
my mother sojourned at Ramabulana  
my uncle is Ndebele  
my father is my father  
I am South Africa

Recognising the significance of nationalism in anti-colonial struggles, the speaker's 'assertions, recoveries, and identifications, all of them quite literally grounded on this poetically projected base ... are made possible by a sense of the land reappropriated by its people' (Said 1993: 273). This was not an easy process, especially as the political exiles had the additional challenges of distance and dislocation.

In 1980 the repression within the country was again challenged by the youth, in countrywide education boycotts. The activism of the early 1980s was consolidated by the rise of federations like the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The UDF followed the construction of "the people" that the African National Congress had long been using and which it had recently broadened to include all South Africans resisting oppression. Given the might of the state the vagueness of the construct "the people" had strategic value at that historical juncture, enabling the UDF to unite a broad and powerful opposition. In the 1970s and 1980s the term "the people" did not signify an immanent unity, but represented an imagined construct

issuing from the desire of millions of people to be free from oppression.

A subset of the construct of "the people" is "the community". More than any other concept in the scheme of the popular-democratic it is the term "community" that evokes hybridity. The term "community" conditions the notion of hybridity in ways that are quite significant. In the South African resistance struggle the notion served to shift the focus from isolated individuals to pressure groups with the capacity to challenge the powerful apartheid state and its allies. The construct of "community" did not signify a homogeneous entity but encompassed differentiation. In many of the resistance discourses of the 1970s and 1980s the notion of "community" stood in opposition to the military, economic, political and cultural hegemonies that characterised South African society, as well as the legal and institutional exclusions that secured the domination and profit of a minority.

The literature produced by poets like Wally Serote, Mafika Gwala, Jeremy Cronin, Gcina Mhlope and the early Mbongeni Ngema has tended to speak in a community of dissent. This feature was already apparent in the early 1970s in the community of spirit in the work of the poets Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, Wally Serote and Mafika Gwala. Mtshali's anthology *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (1972; first published in 1971) suggests the pathbreaking nature of his anthology: the title unmistakably locates his poems in English in an African context. The speaker in the title poem "Sounds of a cowhide drum" (1972: 71), which occurs at the end of the anthology, has a public voice which suggests the ideological mission of articulating the experiences of oppressed people. Through the speaker the poet affirms his location within an indigenous oral tradition, celebrating his conjoint roles as orator, historian, seeker and healer:

Boom! Boom! Boom!  
I am the drum on your dormant soul,  
cut from the black hide of a sacrificial cow.

The rest of the anthology features vignettes of township life as the poet explores the potential of the genre to articulate the evolving identity of African people as they became assertive about their location in society.



The symbol of cattle, traditionally the most prized among the possessions of indigenous African people, also informs the title of Mongane Wally Serote's first poetry collection, *Yakhal'inkomo* (1972). The Nguni title, which affirms and develops the image that Mtshali evoked, suggests the politics of the poet: while the literal meaning of the title is "the cry of the cow", Serote explains in his preface that the term signifies "the cry of the cattle at the slaughter house" (1972: 6). This refers to the experience of African people in South Africa. Further on in the preface Serote clarifies his interpretation of the phrase through a story:

Dumile, the sculptor, told me that once in the country he saw a cow being killed. In the kraal cattle were looking on. They were crying for their like, dying at the hands of human beings. Yakhal'inkomo....The cattle raged and fought, they became a terror to themselves; the twisted poles of the kraal rattled and shook. The cattle saw blood flow into the ground (ib.).

Serote remarks on the narrator's reaction: "Dumile held the left side of his chest and said that is where the cry of the cattle hit him ... Yakhal'inkomo"(ib.). By referring to the sculptor Dumile Feni, Serote locates himself within a community of committed artists, and suggests the sharing and interdependence characteristic of popular-democratic production. Dumile's story suggests a range of responses to oppression that different poems in the collection represent: identification with fellow suffering, mourning, terror, self-destruction and rebellion.

Serote draws upon a second example to clarify the theme of "yakhal'inkomo":

I once saw Mankunku Ngozi blowing his saxophone. Yakhal'inkomo. His face was inflated like a balloon, it was wet with sweat, his eyes huge and red. He grew tall, shrank, coiled into himself, uncoiled and the cry came out of his horn.

This is the meaning of Yakhal'inkomo (ib.).

In these lines Serote acknowledges the work of the Cape Town saxophonist, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, who had a popular jazz album in the 1960s called *Yakhal'inkomo*. Thus, Serote draws upon another artist to render the struggle artists have articulating oppression. Through the reference to music Serote builds upon the allusion to indigenous music that Mtshali made to contextualise his own anthology. In the local oral traditions, music and poetry are not distinct genres, and this influence is evident in the collections of both poets.

Serote's use of Dumile Feni and Winston Mankunku Ngozi to establish his frame of reference is a modernist tactic. The gesture is not only formal but ideological, for it underlines the commitment these artists made to the liberation struggle. Serote's strategy suggests two types of solidarity: a fundamental assertion of identity with oppressed people, as well as artistic fellowship in the cause of the liberation. Serote's poems also refer to Nina Simone, Frantz Fanon, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and George Jackson, which suggests that the poet sees his work not only as part of a local movement against apartheid and capitalism but as part of an African, African-American and postcolonial network against oppression.

Serote's reference to jazz music affirms a relationship with a musical paradigm that has roots in the African continent. There are distinct parallels between jazz music, which arose when African slaves in the diaspora were obliged to use western instruments to articulate their feelings, and the work of South African poets who were obliged to use the English language.

In 1977 Mafika Pascal Gwala published an anthology, *Jol'iinkomo*, which, like Serote's first collection, was based on a musical piece by another South African artist, the internationally famous exiled singer Mariam Makeba. In the poem "Getting off the Ride" (1977: 60–68) Gwala refers to

Mariam Makeba's 'Jol'iinkomo' that brings back  
the proud and angry past of my ancestors.

"Jol'iinkomo" refers to a song of encouragement sung by young Xhosa women as young men were preparing to go to war. Like Serote, Gwala interprets the traditional term strategically, explaining in his preface that he understands it to mean "bringing the cattle

home to the safety of the kraal and the village elders" (1977: 6). While Gwala's construction resonates with the title of Mtshali's first collection, it goes further, to challenge the linguistic/ethnic divisions of apartheid. It was unthinkable in the scheme of apartheid, which sought to divide and rule the black majority, for a Zulu-speaking person to appreciate Xhosa culture. (Yet the differences between Zulu and Xhosa are not even a matter of language but dialect, yet the apartheid state sought to escalate these divergences into linguistic and even ethnic differences.)

This tapestry of poems and songs depend upon the reader/audience for closure. As public and mobilising forms of art they closely involve and represent their audiences in their processes. Such forms of literature sought to construct spaces where voices that were fragmented, dislocated, marginalised and silenced in South Africa had a forum and a locus, in this way anticipating the developments in the labour and mass democratic movements in the 1980s. It is evident that the cultural activity that occurred in the context of the struggle did more than just accompany or reflect the liberation process; there was a reciprocal and dialectical relationship (Cabral 1979: 205–212) between culture and the struggle.

Democratic ideals have been powerful in the resistance to minority domination, particularly in the 1980s when, across the country, there was an unprecedented development of strategic alliances between a variety of resistance structures with a unitary, democratic state and full franchise as the common objectives. Given that elsewhere in the world there are right-wing parties that call themselves "popular", the term "democratic" in popular-democratic is an important qualifier, indicating the values that inform its orientation.

The democratic ideal of the liberation organisations proved more threatening to the security of the minority regime than Communism or Marxism which the National Party government vilified. Part of the political imagery of the resistance movements, the term democracy signified both an ideal state and an informing process. The value of the construct increased both because and despite the repression of the state. The contention of the state and other forces (such as business conglomerates, conservative-liberals, and homeland leaders) that differences between South Africans ruled out a democratic political dispensation in a unitary state was powerfully



challenged by the UDF and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

There was a curious amount of affinity between the worker culture and the culture of other sectors of oppressed people in the 1980s, perhaps in reaction to the divisive role of the state. Organised workers across the country tended not to see their workplace struggles as being separate from their community struggles, and they did not confine themselves to singing only worker songs, but also sang the freedom songs of the liberation struggle. This is also evident in the COSATU worker literature (Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Malange 1986; Oliphant 1991).

Most worker-artists were obliged to use the materials on hand. Fugitive forms of expression came into existence amidst indifference and hostility from the dominant, and without cultural precedent or authority (Brett 1986; Barber 1987; and Mattelart and Siegelau 1983). By adapting traditional forms to suit the demands of the period, the industrial environment and the new political challenges, the worker poets made a significant contribution to the development of South African literature:

Oral poetry, thought by many to be a dead tradition or the preserve of chiefly praises, resurfaced as a voice of ordinary black workers and their struggles (Sitas in Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Malange 1986: 3–4).

When he was a shop steward Alfred Temba Qabula composed *izibongo* (praise poems) for a Metal and Allied Workers' Union annual general meeting in 1984. Qabula used the praise form, an old and distinctive art form with socio-political resonances, to raise the workers' consciousness of their union and its role in their lives. His performance acted as a catalyst and

[o]rdinary black workers with performing and rhetorical power began orating their poetry in Zulu, using all the elements they could gather from their cultural formations to express a new sense of self-identity (Sitas 1989: 47).

Through poems that were innovative while expressing continuity, the worker poets contested the monopoly of the Inkatha Freedom

Party (IFP) over Zulu cultural traditions, just as they challenged the IFP's claim to inheriting the mantle of Zulu resistance to colonialism. In their use of the praise form poets like Alfred Qabula, Mi Hlatshwayo and Madlizinyoka Ntanzu showed the

symbols of the Zulu past being lured away from an aggressive ethnic nationalism and put to the service of a wider, more egalitarian cause [which] challenges the notion that oral forms belong to the margins of contemporary life (Gunner 1986: 37).

Sitas confirms this view of the progressive politics of the worker *izimbongi* in his reference to the work of Hlatshwayo as a chronicler, who

*consciously transform[s] tradition propelled by a future he longs for as opposed to the izimbongi of KwaZulu who are attempting to preserve social hierarchy by linking it to the past (1986: 52).*

Many expressions of popular-democratic literature gave content and cohesion to the local, regional, national and international struggles. The struggle in South Africa resonated with other local struggles elsewhere in the world, and the support of other oppressed people and organisations was vital. In countries that have suffered imperialist domination, nationalism is an important moment in the development of autonomy (imperialism has to be contested along national boundaries). Resistance poets like Dikobe wa Mogale drew on the developments in other countries to sustain the struggle in South Africa. Wa Mogale locates the complex challenges of the South African liberation movement in the context of the violations of power that occur across the world in "bantwini ngcipe's testament" (1984: 46–49). Beginning with Latin America the poem ranges through the Middle East to the Pacific and Asia:

i come from the Pacific where our home is being  
turned into  
a dumping ground for nuclear wastes  
I come from Asia where the violation of human rights  
and dignity  
continues unabated

Wa Mogale points out that the material interests of developed countries in Europe are not exempt from the machinations of military-industrial complexes:

i come from the backyards of Europe where the  
deployment of nuclear  
arms and militarisation brings us daily closer to  
Armageddon

Eventually the poem focuses on Africa:

i come from Afrika,  
with the wounds of colonialism, neo-colonialism  
and imperialism

The poet's integrative approach challenges the invidious "universality" of neocolonial culture. Like most of the resistance poets, Wa Mogale confirms Frantz Fanon's view that the people who initiate revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity (Bhabha 1995: 208).

In addition to the liberation movements' strategic need for a broad construction of "the people" there were also ontological reasons. Progressive sectors of the liberation movement challenged the dominant mechanisms of segmentation and rejected the view that a person is essentially part of one and only one discrete racial, ethnic or other group (as the government's schema suggested). In the revolutionary climate a combination of approaches to identity construction (recognisably materialist, poststructuralist and postcolonialist) was on the ascendent. Identity began to be construed not as a fixed entity but as a series of conjunctures, contingent upon various processes of composition and recomposition as people were subjected to forces such as politics, language, religious culture and commerce (Amselle, cited by Miller 1990: 35).

The popular-democratic has been constituted through the process of struggle and popular space, as Mattelart recognises, "is not a space given a priori... a constitutive definition of the popular is itself at stake in the struggle" (Mattelart and Siegelau 1983: 18). This applies as much to the struggle itself as to the writing that engaged with the struggle. Given that most of the discursive spaces were closed off by the state many popular-democratic literary expressions



inserted themselves into the public discourse as part of the counter-hegemonic process. An early example of this is Wally Serote's poem "The Actual Dialogue" (1972: 9):

Do not fear Baas.  
 It's just that I appeared  
 And our faces met  
 In this black night that's like me.  
 Do not fear —  
 We will always meet  
 When you do not expect me.  
 I will appear  
 In the night that's black like me.  
 Do not fear —  
 Blame your heart  
 When you fear me -  
 I will blame my mind  
 When I fear you  
 In the night that's black like me.  
 Do not fear Baas,  
 My heart is as vast as the sea  
 And your mind as the earth.  
 It's awright Baas,  
 Do not fear.

The patently inaccurate title, the laboured repetitions, the inappropriate tone, and the grovelling persona of "The Actual Dialogue" seem designed to provoke assorted apartheid or conservative-liberal stereotypes regarding black workers or poets. At the same time the improbable situation of the subordinate comforting the superior as well as the use of the word "Baas" risks alienating two significant groups of intended readers (of Serote's 1972 anthology *Yakhal'inkomo*): black intellectuals and Black Consciousness activists, and sympathetic white intellectuals.

That the poet takes such a risk offers a clue to the tactic behind the inconsistencies. The "good native" who knows his place offers a neat cover for the challenges and threats that are woven into the statements directed at the "baas", e. g., the references to blame (lines 11–14) seem to be unduly even-handed (given the one-sidedness of

repression in South Africa at the time) until the counterweight is delivered (in lines 17–18), which alludes to the worst fear of the ruling minority: the substantive numerical superiority of black people. It emerges that the statements are not intended to balance each other for the poet does not subscribe to the balancing equations of liberalism, which tended to apportion blame equally in a severely unbalanced society. Rather, the later lines (17–18) suggest that the earlier lines (6–18) express criticism of the irrational fears the majority have for the tiny minority. This clarifies the significance of the much repeated phrase of reassurance (“Do not fear Baas”), which occupies five of the twenty lines, and which starts and concludes the poem: the implication, in a police state, of such excessive repetition is that the opposite is signified, i.e., “Baas” has every reason to be afraid.

Such a reading is supported by the curious title, “The Actual Dialogue”. There is only one speaker so, notwithstanding the noun, the influence of the adjective and the definite article, the title is inaccurate. There is no dialogue in the poem. The extravagant layering of improbabilities parallels the Prime Minister B. J. Vorster’s claim that his government had embarked on a policy of *detente* (dialogue) with other economically-captive African states. So foreign was the process to the South African government that it was given the gloss of a French diplomatic expression. Or perhaps the apartheid state had deemed it unnecessary to agitate its supporters, hence the (charade of) dialogue had to be concealed in sophisticated jargon. The government made similar claims of engaging in dialogue with “homeland” leaders, to the derision of activists who challenged the possibility that the government could have a meaningful dialogue with servile, unrepresentative puppets. This is clear at an intermediate level of the poem’s operation, where attitude of the cringing speaker suggests a bantustan leader’s anxiety to assure the white government of his loyalty, an allusion to the feudal relations that the National Party tried to institutionalise.

Through the use of parody “The Actual Dialogue” reproduces the discursive universe of the government while exposing its ideological operation, thus challenging the illusion that the apartheid state tried to sustain.

In the equally fiercely guarded cultural arenas several resistance writers used their hard-won public voices to challenge the dominant discourses, opening up new possibilities in the literary form and language as they reconceptualised the relationships between power, communication and art in the South African society. This is apparent in poems such as Wally Serote's "They Do It" (1972: 23), and Keith Gottschalk's "For Ashley Kriel whom they killed by Hazendal" (Coetzee and Willemse 1989: 91-2). Such poems attest to the fact that the resistance literature was not merely reactive or whining, as several conservative-liberal critics chose to characterise what they dubbed "protest" literature, a literature of complaint aimed at supposedly sympathetic but ineffectual fractions of the dominant (Narismulu 1998). Instead, by relating cultural practices to other forms of social and political activity, and by challenging the cultural apparatuses themselves, popular-democratic expressions challenged the ruling concepts of literature as fetishes of class or subculture, e.g., Serote's "They Do It" (1972: 23) and "The Face of a Happening" (1972: 47-8). In turn, the resistance literature did not seek to be objective, neutral, trans-historical or trans-geographic, for it took its bearings from its temporal and spatial location as well as from the history of repression and marginalisation of the majority. That hybrid forms can turn "the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention" (Bhabha 1995: 35) is evident in Serote's "The Actual Dialogue" (1972: 9).

Owing to the precarious political situation, expressions of popular-democratic culture in the 1970s and 1980s tended to be provisional and experimental, makeshift and contingent, very much of the nature of work in progress. But this does not imply that the popular-democratic was an amorphous, catch-all category, which hybridity often suggests. As Mattelart asserts:

Admitting that the space of popular concepts and practices is a space under construction and thus open to debate does not mean that it is an empty bottle into which everyone pours their own meaning (Mattelart and Siegelau 1983: 24).



Instead the resistance literature of the South African liberation struggle gave a much needed material locus and political content to the popular-democratic culture that was nascent, and truncated or perhaps merely interrupted by F. W. de Klerk's pre-emptive political manoeuvres on 2 February 1990.

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## De l'identité retrouvée à l'engagement politique chez Aimé Césaire

NAJIB REDOUANE

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On a beaucoup écrit sur Césaire. Cet auteur se distingue dans la littérature antillaise d'expression française par une œuvre poétique et théâtrale qui prend, aux yeux de plusieurs, l'envergure d'une véritable épopée. Son oeuvre majeure, traduite en plusieurs langues, fait de lui à côté de Senghor et Damas, l'un des pères fondateurs de la Négritude. Le *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* fait aujourd'hui figure de classique de la littérature du monde noir.

*Le Cahier* est plus qu'un écrit poétique et épique. Il est en quelque sorte "le grand cri nègre, le grand cri de l'Homme qui pour lui-même et pour toute sa race "refuse l'inacceptable"" (Kesteloot 1962: 26). Cette œuvre, qui plonge le lecteur dans un univers mythique d'où émergent les signes d'un destin à la fois personnel et collectif, est l'expression immédiate et précise d'inquiétudes et d'aspirations profondément humaines. Elle conjugue avec autant de bonheur dans ses structures, ses images et son écriture, les problèmes et les choix historiques ou culturels auxquels sont confrontés les peuples africains et antillais, dans la spécificité de leurs situations concrètes et respectives. Elle dévoile également l'expérience et la sensibilité martiniquaises par le dedans, telles que le Martiniquais lui-même les voit.

Le but de notre étude est de montrer comment, dans ce long poème "qui contient le célèbre cri passionnément repris par toute une génération qui est la définition de la négritude césairienne" (Condé 1978: 31), la voix poétique puissante de Césaire ramène dans des contours historiques dramatiques la réhabilitation de la négritude et l'expression de sa dignité. En d'autres termes



comment Césaire parvient à affirmer son identité retrouvée par rapport au monde, non pas comme une révélation subite, mais comme "une recherche, un élargissement progressif d'une personnalité" (Ngal 1975: 10) qui ne peut ni ne veut oublier ce qui seul peut donner la plénitude de leurs sens aux mots humanité et liberté. Nous tenterons aussi de voir comment ce texte, "né d'une expérience spirituelle intense, d'ordre exclusivement personnel et subjectif" (Combe 1993: 10), conditionne l'engagement du poète vers des combats raciaux et politiques.

La naissance de la négritude prônée par Damas, Senghor et Césaire, en qui s'incarne la race noire, donne lieu à une prise de conscience sur l'importance du fait racial, à savoir qu'un Noir n'est pas un Blanc et que tous les Noirs vivent en commun certains problèmes particuliers. Ainsi, la première étape de ce type idéal est "Cette reconnaissance de soi-même qui s'ensuit, pour Césaire et ses compagnons, d'une prise en charge de leur destin de nègre, de leur histoire et de leur culture propre" (Kesteloot 1962: 22). Pour les chantres de la négritude, leur mouvement se situe avant tout comme "un sur-moi nègre où se rassemblent toutes les valeurs spécifiques des Noirs jadis étouffées par la colonisation" (Kimoni 1985: 62). Leur vision, si grande soit-elle, tend d'une part à réconcilier les Noirs avec eux-mêmes en mettant fin à leurs liens de dépendance aux Européens et, d'autre part, à muer leur sentiment de malheurs, de honte et d'humiliation en une volonté de redressement et de fierté. Mais face aux autres adeptes de la négritude, Césaire fait figure d'extrémiste. Il incarne une tendance plus intransigeante. Sa négritude est très profonde et radicale. Elle ne s'accompagne d'aucune tentative de séduction. Elle est à l'image d'un monde radicalement traumatisé, plus profondément bouleversé, le monde antillais. Jean-Paul Sartre dit: "Les mots de Césaire ne décrivent pas la négritude, ne la désignent pas, ne la copient pas du dehors comme un peintre fait d'un modèle: ils la font; ils la composent sous nos yeux. (...) C'est aussi ce poème [de Césaire] baveux, sanglant, plein de glaires, qui se tord dans la poussière comme un ver coupé". (Sartre 1948: XXVIII-XXIX)

En dépit de multiples sarcasmes qui n'épargnent aucun des pères de la négritude, Stanislas Adotévi, avant de passer à des critiques plus substantielles, déclare: "Césaire surtout traduit

mieux que quiconque ce battement rythmique de la négritude "qui se mit debout pour la première fois" pour exiger son entrée dans ce cri de révolte et de protestation qui assure au nègre sa dignité avant Adam". (Adotévi 1972: 21)

D'un entretien avec Aimé Césaire, le 11 août 1975, Keith Louis Walker retient cette définition de la négritude: "Elle comporte trois éléments: primo, l'affirmation d'une identité, secundo, l'affirmation d'une solidarité, et en troisième lieu, l'affirmation d'une fidélité à un ensemble de valeurs noires" (Walker 1979: 17). Il s'agit en fait, d'une réaction d'intellectuel qui, conscient d'être noir, simple reconnaissance d'un fait, implique acceptation, prise en charge de son destin de noir, de son histoire et de sa culture. Sa négritude est essentiellement affirmation et recherche d'une identité. Et comme l'affirme J. Laude:

Elle n'est nullement statique ou passéiste, nullement renfermée sur elle-même, elle est historiquement élaborée dans une situation politique définie, d'abord, revendication d'une personnalité (opprimée et méprisée par le colonialisme), d'une liberté et d'une dignité reconnues pour la plupart des autres civilisations. (Laude 1966: 427)

Ainsi, dépassant les troubles de conscience, d'âme noire, Césaire "pose les bases d'une négritude fondée sur l'action révolutionnaire appelée à repenser les rapports des populations indigènes avec l'autorité coloniale" (Kimoni 1985: 99). Il manifeste clairement "son désir d'inaugurer l'ère nègre, renouant avec l'Afrique vivante dans ses griots, ses sanctuaires et ses sages" (ib.). En effet, lorsqu'il constate douloureusement, aussi bien aux Antilles qu'à Paris, la même résignation, le même complexe d'infériorité, la même démission raciale chez le peuple noir et que l'utilisation du mot "nègre" relève du péjoratif mais symbolise aussi le mépris<sup>1</sup>, il prend la ferme décision de désaliéner les siens grâce au pouvoir

<sup>1</sup> Guy Ossito Midiohouan souligne dans *L'idéologie dans la littérature négro-africaine d'expression française* que le terme nègre sert "à désigner des êtres tenus pour des sous-hommes, supposés congénitalement tarés et poursuivis inéluctablement par la malédiction de leur ancêtre Cham" (1986: 15).

magique de la parole. Pour Césaire, le Verbe est capable de transformer l'essence des choses. Il peut renverser les situations figées éternellement, opérer des changements et amener l'ère nouvelle de liberté, de dignité et de respect. L'on reconnaît dans cette déclaration du poète le rôle qui est dévolu au Verbe dans l'univers des forces:

Je retrouverais le secret des grandes communications  
et des grandes combustions. Je dirais orage. Je dirais  
fleuve. je dirais tornade. Je dirais feuille. Je dirais  
arbre. (...)

Et vous fantômes montez bleus de chimie d'une  
forêt de bêtes traquées de machines tordues d'un  
jububier de chairs pourries d'un panier d'huîtres  
d'yeux d'un lacinis de lanières découpées dans le beau  
sisal d'une peau d'homme j'aurais des mots assez  
vastes pour vous contenir... ". (Césaire 1983: 21)

Alors si pour Césaire la négritude, c'est "le Noir en quête de lui-même, et qui pour se retrouver, dans un immense effort, remonte à ses sources vers l'Afrique-mère, à travers son histoire, ses arrachements, ses métamorphoses" (Kesteloot 1962: 31), il se trouve par la force des choses engagé dans la même aventure que son peuple. Ainsi, par ce retour à l'origine, le poète ne regarde pas son peuple se débattre ou se battre. Il se bat, se débat lui aussi et vit de la vie des siens, de leur grandeur, de leurs bassesses. Il s'identifie avec son peuple et revit les événements douloureux qui les ont traumatisés dans l'inconscient. Et de toutes ses forces, il se donne comme mission de "modifier la destinée de son peuple, remodeler son peuple, sculpter un nouveau type de nègre martiniquais" (ib. 37). C'est alors qu'en retrouvant son identité perdue et bafouée au cours de l'histoire humaine, purifiée par le sang des sacrifices et des meurtres rituels de ses ancêtres, il peut la brandir et l'affirmer dans un chant majestueux. Telle une chose vivante, profonde, patiente et irréductible. Une exigence de justice, de dignité et d'humanité.



Ma négritude n'est pas une pierre, sa surdité  
 ruée contre la clameur du jour,  
 ma Négritude n'est pas une taie d'eau morte  
 sur l'oeil mort de la terre  
 ma Négritude n'est ni une tour ni une cathédrale  
 Elle plonge dans la chair ardente du sol  
 Elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel  
 elle troue l'accablement opaque de sa droite  
 patience. (Césaire 1983: 46-47)

Au regard du *Cahier*, il apparaît que la notion de la quête d'identité est intimement liée à un mode d'existence, à une société. L'itinéraire que trace ce long poème est nettement défini. Après un rejet et de la Martinique et des martiniquais, "ces quelques milliers de mortiférés qui tournent en rond dans la cale basse d'une île" (ib. 24), Césaire décide de partir. Il désire quitter son pays "dans la mesure où la Martinique exclut toute grandeur, où elle lui interdit d'atteindre sa stature d'homme" (Kesteloot 1962: 19). Mais, il est paradoxal de constater "qu'au bout de ce qui ressemble à une fuite, Aimé Césaire trouvera au contraire une affirmation de soi et une prise de conscience politique" (Condé 1978: 7). Il retourne à sa terre natale où tout est libre et fraternel. Il dit:

...J'arriverais lisse et jeune dans ce pays mien et je dirais à ce pays dont le limon entre dans la composition de ma chair: "J'ai longtemps erré et je reviens vers la hideur désertée de vos plaies". Je viendrais à ce pays mien et je lui dirais: "Embrassez-moi sans crainte... Et si je ne sais que parler, c'est pour vous que je parlerai. (Césaire 1983: 22)

Le jeune intellectuel retourne aux Antilles et voit sa famille et son peuple. Il revoit les Antillais, ces damnés de l'enfer, ces abouliques en compagnie de la mort et de l'alcool. Il y a d'une part les malheureux et d'autre part, les aliénés fouettés ensemble par la même misère et les mêmes souffrances.

Les Antilles qui ont faim, les Antilles grêlées de petite vérole, les Antilles dynamitées d'alcool, échouées dans la boue de cette baie, dans la poussière de cette ville sinistrement échouées. (ib. 8)

C'est le drame des Antillais prisonniers de leur île, prisonniers de leur exil. Césaire peint la grande aliénation des Antilles, son aspect matériel et psychique. C'est un monde tragique que la misère a rongé et rendu inapte à la lutte et à la révolte. Et comme le dit Iyay Kimoni:

Les Antilles sont une terre de la peur, du complexe de supériorité chez l'ancien maître, de l'infériorité chez l'homme de couleur. De même que l'affranchi d'aujourd'hui continue d'attendre son pain quotidien de son maître d'hier qui est son patron, ainsi le Noir continue à porter ses défauts d'hier, la nonchalance, l'aversion pour le travail de plantation, la résignation, l'obsession de ressembler à son maître. Le Noir est marqué par le sentiment de son inutilité et de sa propre indignité. Il croit qu'il est maudit, que son sort a été déterminé une fois pour toutes. Ce n'est là que le résultat de trois siècles d'esclavage. (Kimoni 1985: 85-86)

Du fait même que cette vérité domine l'univers antillais, Césaire n'abdique pas. Il est celui qui détient le Verbe et par conséquent est capable de bouleverser la vie dans ses profondeurs. Il refuse de sombrer dans le vertige destructeur qui frappe son pays. Et, "loin de s'écarter avec mépris et dégoût des siens dont une longue absence l'a séparé et qu'il pourrait renier, le voilà qui s'en approche et les revendique comme part de lui-même. Il sait quel long et douloureux chemin en a fait ce qu'ils sont, les a conduits là où ils sont" (Condé 1978: 32). C'est pourquoi dans le voyage initiatique qu'il entreprend, le poète prête l'oreille aux voix tumultueuses qui ont marqué l'histoire tragique de son pays, s'enracine profondément dans sa terre et chante la douleur de son peuple. Il évoque, grâce à sa mémoire, cette période qui a traumatisé les Antilles et "Les allusions touchent à tout ce qu'il y a eu d'horrible, d'atroce, d'inhumain contre la race noire". (Owusu-Sarpong 1986: 38-39)

Ma mémoire est entourée de sang. Ma mémoire  
à sa ceinture de cadavres! [...]  
L'odeur-du-nègre, ça-fait-pousser-la-canne  
rappelez-vous-le-vieux-dicton:  
battre-un-nègre, c'est le nourrir (Césaire 1983: 35)

ou encore:

Et ce pays cria pendant des siècles que nous sommes des bêtes brutes; que les pulsations de l'humanité s'arrêtent aux portes de la négrerie; que nous sommes un fumier ambulante hideusement prometteur de cannes tendres et de coton soyeux et l'on nous marquait au fer rouge et nous dormions dans nos excréments [...]

J'entends de la cale monter les malédictions enchaînées, les hoquettements des mourants, le bruit d'un qu'on jette à la mer... les abois d'une femme en gésine... des raclements d'ongles cherchant des gorges... des ricanements de fouet... des farfouillis de vermine parmi des lassitudes... " (ib. 38-39)

"ceux qui n'ont connu de voyages que de déracinements

ceux qui se sont assouplis aux agenouillements

ceux qu'on domestiqua et christianisa (ib. 44)

Césaire fait le point sur la christianisation des esclaves et leur vente sur les places des villes antillaises. Il rejette le christianisme comme agent principal du colonialisme. En effet, avant le débarquement les négriers baptisent ces nègres captifs. Dans son livre, *Histoire de la Traite des Noirs*, Hubert Deschamps souligne que "chacun des esclaves reçoit un nom chrétien et un peu de sel sur la langue; on leur apprend qu'ils sont désormais enfants de Dieu et qu'ils doivent être contents" (Deschamps 1972: 59). Mais, ce chrétien noir qu'on propose en vente "n'est plus aux yeux de l'acheteur qu'un pur objet". (Hoffman 1973: 185)

... et l'on vendait sur les places et l'aune de drap anglais et la viande salée coûtaient moins cher que nous, et ce pays était calme, tranquille, disant que l'esprit de Dieu était dans ses actes. (Césaire 1983: 39)

Devant l'innocence piétinée, devant l'humanité entérinée par le reste des hommes, Césaire ne peut qu'accepter l'histoire injurieuse de sa race mais son acceptation sera provisoire:



J'accepte, j'accepte  
et le nègre fustigé qui dit: "Pardon mon maître"  
et les vingt-neuf coups de fouet légal  
et le cachot de quatre pieds de haut  
et le carcan à branches  
et le jarret coupé à mon audace marronne  
et la fleur de lys qui flue du fer rouge sur le gras de  
mon épaule  
[...]. J'accepte! (ib. 52-53)

Et mon originale géographie aussi; la carte du  
monde faite à mon usage, non pas teinte aux  
arbitraires couleurs des savants, mais à la géométrie  
de mon sang répandu, j'accepte. (ib. 55-56)

De force, à cause des souffrances infligées aux nègres, Césaire proclame la solidarité de la race noire et évoque ici, aux dires de Albert Owusu-Sarpong, tout ce qui a concouru à esclavager l'homme noir:

d'abord la diaspora noire évoquée sous forme de "géométrie de mon sang répandu"; ensuite vient la souffrance sur les plantations de canne à sucre avec l'inévitable fouet: "le nègre fustigé"; puis une énumération de certains articles du code noir de Colbert: "et les vingt-neuf coups de fouet légal [...] et le carcan à branches [...] et le jarret coupé à mon audace marronne", enfin, l'acceptation, puisqu'il en est ainsi. Tel est le document qu'Aimé Césaire nous laisse sur l'institution esclavagiste. (Owusu-Sarpong 1986: 20)

Le poète attaque ainsi démesurément la civilisation européenne pour l'oppression, la brutalité et le cynisme avec lesquels elle a enchaîné et exploité le nègre. Une civilisation qui, tout en proclamant de sublimes principes de liberté et d'humanitarisme, est apparue plus comme un élément perturbateur que civilisateur. Une telle puissance, concentrée sur le progrès technique et négligeante du bonheur humain a détruit un ordre traditionnel plus proche de la nature et de l'homme.

Écoutez le monde blanc  
 horriblement las de son effort immense  
 ses articulations rebelles craquer sous les étoiles  
 dures  
 ses raideurs d'acier bleu transperçant la chair mystique.  
 écoute ses victoires proditoires trompeter ses défaites  
 écoute aux alibis grandioses son piètre trébuchement

Pitié pour nos vainqueurs omniscients et naïfs!  
 (Césaire 1983: 48)

Fier de son courage, "de sa résistance et de son intégrité, fier de la paille nègre dans l'acier occidental" (Corzani 1978: 118–119), Césaire s'attache à restaurer le passé de son peuple mutilé. Pour lui, l'Afrique a été solidement présente au commencement de l'histoire de l'humanité.

Non, nous n'avons jamais été amazones du roi du Dahomey, ni princes de Ghana avec huit cents chameaux, ni docteurs à Tombouctou Askia le Grand étant roi, ni architectes de Djenné, ni Mahdis, ni guerriers. (Césaire 1983: 38)

Dans son "Discours sur l'Art Africain", Césaire dresse l'inventaire des services que la négritude a rendus au monde. Parmi ces services, il souligne particulièrement l'édification, grâce à la négritude, d'un véritable humanisme, "de l'humanisme universel, car, enfin, il n'y a pas d'humanisme s'il n'est pas universel, il n'y a pas d'humanisme sans dialogue...". (Césaire 1966: 104)

Il importe de préciser que dans ce "souci de réhabiliter le peuple noir dans son histoire tronquée, dans sa spécificité bafouée" (Owusu-Sarpong 1986: 69), Césaire se révolte. Et sa révolte consiste à jeter un regard honnête sur la Martinique et à réveiller ce peuple, tantôt à le badiner, tantôt à le fustiger: "Et voici ceux qui ne se consolent point de n'être pas faits à la ressemblance de Dieu mais du diable, ceux qui considèrent qu'on est nègre comme commis de seconde classe" (Césaire 1983: 58). Mais d'abord, la révolte épique de Toussaint, Toussaint Louver-

ture, est pour lui le premier cas illuminant de la révolte noire. C'est grâce à cet "homme seul qui défie les cris blancs de la mort blanche" (ib. 25) qu'à Haïti, pour la première fois "la négritude se tient debout" (ib. 24). Ainsi, faire l'histoire de Toussaint Louverture revient à faire l'histoire de la Révolte des esclaves noirs des Antilles. Et se réclamer de Toussaint, c'est se réclamer de la révolte résolue qui défie le danger et qui s'attache à se dégager de la culture occidentale pour retrouver au fond de soi les sources les plus profondes de son identité retrouvée.

Dans cet itinéraire de libération aussi bien culturelle que politique, c'est-à-dire d'une révolution du nègre, le message idéologique de Césaire surgit de cette urgence d'émanciper et d'affirmer l'identité noire. Pour que les Antillais en prennent conscience, ils doivent se débarrasser de l'image méprisante que leur renvoient les blancs et doivent cesser d'être des "bons nègres" qui ont honte de leur couleur de peau. Il faut détruire l'univers de l'aliénation et Césaire prend la parole pour dire à ses congénères "qu'au lieu de faire tout comme un blanc", il faut rester au contraire bien noir, que c'est là leur vérité et qu'elle est belle:

à moi mes danses  
mes danses de mauvais nègre  
à moi mes danses  
la danse brise-carcan  
la danse saute-prison  
la danse il-est-bon-et-beau-et-légitime-  
d'être-nègre. (ib. 64)

Aussi cherche-t-il à donner à l'Antillais sa valeur, toutes ses chances, lui soufflant qu'il peut houer, fouir, couper tout et qu'il peut croire à son demain sans renoncer à son passé. Césaire refuse la misère qui a rendu l'Antillais sombre, inerte, silencieux et rejette tout ce qu'on avait fourré dans sa pauvre cervelle:

qu'une fatalité pesait sur lui qu'on ne prend pas au collet; qu'il n'avait pas puissance sur son propre destin; qu'un Seigneur méchant avait de toute éternité écrit des lois d'interdiction en sa nature pelvienne. (ib. 59-60)



Pour Césaire, les tambours ne battent pas pour l'Antillais qui pour être le bon nègre, doit "croire honnêtement à son indignité, sans curiosité perverse de vérifier jamais les hiéroglyphes fatidiques" (ib. 60). Et afin de réclamer le dû de son peuple et effacer les plaies de l'histoire et les injustices du temps, il cherche pour son pays "non des coeurs de dattes, mais des coeurs d'homme qui c'est pour entrer aux villes d'argent par la grand'porte trapézoïdale, qu'ils battent le sang viril". (ib. 58)

Il faut dire qu'après un forage intérieur très fulgurant, vient le moment où grâce à l'identification du poète à son peuple, le miracle qui se produit:

Et voici soudain que force et vie m'assaillent comme un taureau et l'onde de vie circonvient la papille du morne, et voilà toutes les veines et veinules qui s'affairent au sang neuf et l'énorme poumon des cyclones qui respire et le feu thésaurisé des volcans et le gigantesque pouls sismique bat maintenant la mesure d'un corps vivant en mon ferme embrasement. (ib. 56-57)

Conscient de l'histoire douloureuse de son pays, Césaire cherche à glorifier les plaies et les souffrances de son peuple. Il les magnifie, il en fait des vertus et des titres de gloire. En contemplant son héritage africain, il se réclame très haut du pays de "la lance de nuit" et de ses ancêtres, les Bambaras. Ce processus de renaissance, de naissance, s'accomplit par cette responsabilité d'enseigner à l'Antillais ce chant autrefois odieux, "qu'il-est-beau-et-bon-et-légitime-d'être-nègre" (ib. 64). Cette fierté d'être noir, il faudra l'apprendre à ces descendants d'esclaves qui ont honte de leurs origines:

Et nous sommes debout maintenant, mon pays et moi, les cheveux dans le vent, ma main petite maintenant dans son poing énorme et la force n'est pas en nous, mais au-dessus de nous, dans une voix qui vrille la nuit et l'audience comme la pénétrance d'une guêpe apocalyptique. (ib. 57)

Lorsque Césaire annonce la chute de la vieille Négritude, il annonce aussi le temps de la libération des noirs qui se débarrassent de toutes leurs lâcheté, docilité et obséquiosité. "Je dis Hurrah! La vieille négritude progressivement se cadavérise" (ib. 60). En fait, la mort de la "vieille négritude" suppose la naissance d'une nouvelle, augurée par la "fulgurance d'un signe" (ib.). Ce signe, c'est celui de la révolte à bord d'un navire qui transporte une cargaison d'esclaves:

le négrier craque de tout part... Son ventre se convulse et résonne... L'affreux ténia de sa cargaison ronge les boyaux fétides de l'étrange nourrisson des mers! (ib. 61)

Avec la naissance du nouveau Nègre, comme le dit Daniel Delas, les trompettes résonnent "de l'hymne à la Négritude, ponctuée de coups de feu et de vivats". (Delas 1991: 37)

Eia pour le Kailcédrat royal!  
Eia pour ceux qui n'ont jamais rien inventé  
pour ceux qui n'ont jamais rien exploré  
pour ceux qui n'ont jamais rien dompté.  
(Césaire 1983: 47)

Le vent de liberté qui souffle dans les Antilles et qui anime des êtres qui n'ont plus peur de leur propre peur montre la Négritude comme un acte de libération totale. La foule du début du poème, celle qui ne sait pas faire foule, celle qui ne sait qu'esquiver le combat, passer "à côté de son cri", fuir, se "désencastrer", celle qui évite de participer à toute tentative de révolte par peur, par poltronnerie n'est plus inerte et passive. Elle est devenue active, révoltée et, surtout, elle est consciente et unie. Ainsi, l'itinéraire retracé dans le Cahier va d'une image dégradée, avilie de la "race" noire, interjeté par les Antillais, à la projection triomphante d'une "négritude" assumée. C'est dire tout simplement que quand le noir aura conquis, avec sa liberté, le droit d'être lui-même, la négritude sera grande et grandiose, libre et debout.

La voici  
 plus inattendûment  
 debout  
 debout  
 debout dans les cordages  
 debout à la base  
 debout à la boussole  
 debout à la carte  
 debout  
 et  
 libre. (ib. 62)

On ne saurait trop insister sur l'importance que revêtent, pour Césaire, les efforts qu'il consent pour apporter à son peuple une aide qui facilite les processus de sa prise de conscience et qui l'incite à inscrire sa destinée dans la ligne générale d'une civilisation libre. Son écrit n'est pas considéré comme une simple nostalgie du passé. C'est l'histoire de sa race qui éclaire les malaises des nègres et touche leur personnalité profonde. C'est une entreprise révolutionnaire, un cri de douleur, une vive dénonciation de l'assimilation et de l'aliénation. Sa parole est essentiellement combative. Elle oblige "les autres races à prendre conscience de l'existence du Nègre, en tant qu'homme appartenant à une race, ayant droit d'exister par lui-même dans le monde libre et de jouir des mêmes illusions que les autres races".<sup>2</sup>

Passionné par la condition de l'homme noir et épousant étroitement l'histoire de sa race, Césaire se dresse en farouche libérateur du peuple antillais et des noirs du monde entier. Il prône une négritude de combat contre une oppression blanche qui se révèle être "une mise en rapport, régie par la loi de la réciprocité d'antagonismes. Elle est surgissement d'un projet de viol d'un monde, d'une existence, entreprise au bout de laquelle [le nègre] est confronté à la nécessité de choisir de vivre ou de mourir" (Boulet 1987: 21). Aussi stigmatise-t-il les résurgences du colonia-

<sup>2</sup> Hilary-Hypolite, Ikechukwu Okam, *La Naissance d'une littérature en Afrique occidentale*, Thèse de doctorat de l'Université de Bordeaux (1965: 83), cité par Kimoni, *Destin de la littérature négro-africaine*, (1985: 101).



lisme en refusant de cautionner l'idée selon laquelle il conviendrait de ménager des étapes entre l'époque coloniale et l'indépendance pure et simple sous un fallacieux prétexte d'apprentissage de la liberté.

L'esclavage ne peut pas être une école de liberté, le colonialisme ne peut pas être une école d'indépendance. Ce sont des choses de deux ordres différents, et jamais l'une ne sortira de l'autre, sinon par effraction et rupture.<sup>3</sup>

Dans ce but, non seulement Césaire affiche-t-il une certaine conscience nationale, mais il tend surtout à arracher l'auréole du colonialisme et à remettre de l'ordre dans le chaos culturel et politique qu'il a créé. C'est dans cette entreprise de longue haleine que l'écrivain a sa place:

Oui, en définitive, c'est aux artistes, aux écrivains, aux hommes de culture, qu'il appartient, brassant dans la quotidienneté des souffrances et des dénis de justice, les souvenirs comme les espérances, de constituer ces grandes réserves de foi, ces grands silos de force où les peuples dans les moments critiques puisent le courage de s'assumer eux-mêmes et de forcer l'avenir. Certains ont pu dire que l'écrivain est un ingénieur des âmes. Nous, dans la conjoncture où nous sommes, nous sommes des propagateurs d'âmes, des multiplicateurs, et à la limite des inventeurs d'âmes. (ib.)

Conscient de cette lourde responsabilité, Césaire insiste sur la légitimité de la démarche de l'écrivain dans la construction de la "cité nouvelle" et sur la nécessité de briser totalement, absolument et définitivement, les vestiges de la société coloniale. Il n'hésite pas à déclarer de vive voix:

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<sup>3</sup> Aimé Césaire, *L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités*, cité par Suzanne Houyoux, *Quand Césaire écrit Lumumba parle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993: 13).

le combat contre le colonialisme n'est pas terminé sitôt qu'on le croit, et parce que l'impérialisme aura été militairement vaincu. Bref, il ne saurait s'agir pour nous de déplacer le colonialisme ou d'intérioriser la servitude. Ce qu'il faut, c'est la détruire, c'est l'extirper au sens propre, c'est-à-dire en arracher les racines et voilà pourquoi la décolonisation vraie sera révolutionnaire ou ne sera pas. (Owusu-Sarpong 1986: 136)

C'est donc un appel à une lutte sans merci, parce qu'elle symbolise celle de toute une race singulière dans son essence et dans son existence. Une race qui, dans un effort collectif et sincère, doit revenir aux sources fondamentales de son authenticité et à laquelle il appartient d'assumer son propre destin.

Un fait à mes yeux capital est celui-ci: que nous, hommes de couleur, en ce moment précis de l'évolution historique, avons, dans notre conscience, pris possession de tout le champ de notre singularité et que nous sommes prêts à assumer sur tous les plans et dans tous les domaines les responsabilités qui découlent de cette prise de conscience. Singularité de "notre situation dans le monde" qui ne se confond avec nulle autre. Singularité de nos problèmes qui ne se ramènent à nul autre problème. Singularité de notre histoire coupée de terribles avatars qui n'appartiennent qu'à elle. Singularité de notre culture que nous voulons vivre de manière de plus en plus réelle. (Césaire 1956: 8)

La prise de position de Césaire fait mieux comprendre que le sort d'un groupe humain ne peut être florissant et valorisant que dans des organisations qui leur sont propres; faites pour lui, faites par lui et adaptées à des fins que lui seul peut déterminer. Il veut inculquer à ses congénères qu'il n'appartient qu'à eux de transformer les conditions d'existence qui sont les leurs et de décider de leur avenir sans se préoccuper de ce que l'autorité coloniale en pense. Il appelle à un retour à l'Afrique vers laquelle doivent converger toutes les forces antillaises.

Et pourtant cette Afrique Noire, la mère de notre culture et de notre civilisation antillaise, c'est d'elle que j'attends la régénération des Antilles; pas de l'Europe qui ne peut que parfaire notre aliénation, mais de l'Afrique qui seule peut revitaliser, repersonnaliser les Antilles. (ib. 15)

Non seulement Césaire rejette l'homme blanc avec sa civilisation mécanique et sa religion jugée hypocrite, mais il exalte trop exclusivement la grandeur de l'âme noire. Il proclame la nostalgie d'un retour à l'Afrique prise comme le berceau de la civilisation humaine, révélée, parfaitement mythique. Cependant, il demeure véritablement obsédé par le thème de l'aliénation non pas délibérément, mais parce que ce thème est inscrit, de manière très profonde, dans l'expérience douloureuse du colonialisme. La domination raciste et l'oppression blanche se caractérisent par les antagonismes de classe et de race:

Entre colonisateur et colonisé, il n'y a de place que pour la corvée, l'intimidation, la pression, la police, l'impôt, le vol, le viol, les cultures obligatoires, le mépris, la méfiance, la morgue, la suffisance, la muflerie, des élites décérébrées, des masses avilies. (Césaire 1955: 19)

Au cœur même de cette dénonciation, Césaire se déchaîne encore plus et révèle aux yeux de l'humanité passive, la grande entreprise de développement que le colonialisme est sensé apporter aux pays colonisés.

On me parle de progrès, de "réalisations", de maladies guéries, de niveaux de vie élevés (...) Moi, je parle de sociétés vidées d'elles-mêmes, de cultures piétinées, d'institutions minées, de terres confisquées, de religions assassinées, de magnificences artistiques anéanties, d'extraordinaires possibilités supprimées. (ib. 19-20)

Pour l'homme dominé, blessé dans sa dignité, piétiné dans sa culture, bafoué dans sa race, le temps n'est pas aux pleurs sur les plaies de l'Histoire. Il faut refuser inconditionnellement l'efface-



ment des traces indélébiles laissées par le colonialisme et oeuvrer pour l'éclatement de la vérité.

On me parle de civilisation, je parle de prolétarianisation et de mystification (...) la vérité est que (..) c'est le moment où l'Europe est tombée entre les mains des financiers et des capitaines d'industrie les plus dénués de scrupules que l'Europe s'est "propagée", que notre malchance a voulu que ce soit cette Europe-là que nous ayons rencontrée sur notre route, et que l'Europe est comptable devant la communauté humaine du plus haut tas de cadavres de l'histoire". (ib. 22-25)

Dans ces propos, la volonté ferme de Césaire de régler ses comptes avec le colonialisme paraît tenace. Fils d'une terre, artificiellement créée en quelque sorte pour l'exploitation économique par l'impérialisme, et ayant retrouvé son identité oubliée dans la souffrance du temps, il crache sa colère. Ses mots sont identification et source pour venir codifier les désirs divers personnel et collectif d'un peuple à la recherche de sa dignité. Sa revendication sociale et politique est une dénonciation constante du racisme, de l'exploitation et de l'injustice faits au nom de l'idéal humaniste Européen. C'est aussi une réclamation de sa fierté d'être antillais, d'être Noir porteur de valeurs séculaires.

Frantz Fanon reconnaît volontiers que "jusqu'en 1940 aucun Antillais n'était capable de se penser nègre. C'est seulement avec l'apparition d'Aimé Césaire qu'on a pu voir naître une revendication, une assomption de la négritude" (Fanon 1952: 144-145). En fait, en tant que mythe libérateur, la négritude césairienne est "un défi au monde occidental, une provocation même, une splendide danse païenne face au christianisme, au colonialisme et au cartésianisme européens" (Corzani 1978: 333). C'est pour cela que le *Cahier du retour au pays natal*, où la valorisation de cette identité retrouvée est réclamée fortement, constitue "un magistral effort de libération des formes occidentales" (Kesteloot 1962: 33). L'écrit n'apporte pas seulement une image authentique de l'homme noir. Il traduit aussi la représentation que le poète se fait de l'homme blanc et de sa civilisation. Césaire n'affirme-t-il pas

n'avoir jamais dissocié son combat poétique du combat proprement politique?

De son côté, René Depestre souligne que "la poésie de Césaire est sans doute la plus violente de ce siècle. Elle porte la bonne violence de la justice et de la vérité" (Depestre 1980: 64-65). Ainsi le cahier est compris comme un écrit de protestation anti-coloniale, caractérisé d'emblée comme "le poème du refus de l'assimilation culturelle, de la dénonciation de la situation coloniale qui la justifie et de la prise de conscience sociale et culturelle" (Condé 1978: 36). Alors, si André Breton considère la parole d'Aimé Césaire "belle comme l'oxygène naissant"<sup>4</sup>, il faut bien le dire que cette parole est devenue le grand cri nègre lancé très fort, cri violent, explosif et aveuglant qui vise à déchirer la surdité de l'indifférence de l'Occident colonisateur. C'est une sorte de déluge lyrique, un déluge purificateur qui valorise la négritude et fait vivre, pour toujours, dans les coeurs de tous les hommes de couleur, tous les opprimés de la terre, la grandeur et la fierté de leur identité retrouvée.

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## El poder de la imaginación: Gaston Bachelard

ALFREDO SALDAÑA

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«Nací en una tierra de arroyos y de ríos, en un rincón de la Champaña ondulada, en el Vallage, así llamado a causa de sus numerosos valles. La más bella de las moradas estaría para mí en lo hondo de un valle, al borde de un agua fluyente, en la breve sombra de los sauces y de los mimbres. Y cuando llegara octubre con sus brumas sobre el río...» (Bachelard 1994: 17). ¿Presintió, soñó, imaginó quien estas palabras escribiera que veinte años después de ser publicadas, un 16 de octubre, encontraría la muerte lejos de su amado paisaje? Gaston Louis Pierre Bachelard nació en 1884 en la localidad de Bar-sur-Aube (Champagne) y murió en París en 1962.

Si la crítica de la conciencia se centró en el sujeto que escribe, se interesó por los fenómenos de la conciencia y se dispuso a revivir las experiencias vividas y las ideas pensadas por los artistas (Poulet 1997), la obra de Gaston Bachelard introdujo como principal tema de estudio la imaginación de la materia y se dedicó a percibir la materialidad de la conciencia según los diferentes tipos de imágenes que la constituyen. Con sus obras sobre la imaginación, Gaston Bachelard ha contribuido a renovar — al margen del legado de la retórica y la poética tradicionales — los métodos no psicoanalíticos y no marxistas de la crítica francesa, inspirados durante años en el positivismo y en investigaciones experimentales de tipo deductivo, y sus trabajos fueron permanente fuente de inspiración para ese aire fresco que se denominó posteriormente *nouvelle critique* (Therrien 1970). Él mismo alude explícitamente a esa labor de renovación en algunas de sus obras;

así, en *L'eau et les rêves*, refiriéndose a los ejemplos literarios de donde extrae las imágenes que con posterioridad analiza, señala: «si nuestras búsquedas resultan de interés, deberán proporcionar algunos medios, algunos instrumentos para renovar la crítica literaria. Es a lo que tiende la introducción de la idea de *complejo de cultura* en la psicología literaria» (Bachelard 1994: 33), una idea que nos remite a las diferentes maneras que pone en práctica un artista para relacionarse con la tradición. Mientras que en su mejor acepción el complejo de cultura puede enriquecer, transformar, hacer progresar, dotar de nuevos impulsos vitales y rejuvenecer una determinada tradición, en su forma más degradada ese mismo complejo de cultura llega a convertirse en una técnica desgastada por el uso y la repetición, la seña de identidad de un artista desprovisto de imaginación. Sin embargo, a pesar de tomar prestados numerosos ejemplos de obras literarias que le sirven para ilustrar sus estudios sobre la imaginación creadora, Bachelard no es, en rigor, un crítico literario, mucho menos un crítico literario en el sentido tradicional.

Así pues, mucho más que mostrarnos las reglas de funcionamiento de la literatura, la crítica literaria bachelardiana se propone estudiar esa misma literatura como un universo en expansión, como un producto de la imaginación creadora; atenta tanto a lo aparente como a lo oculto, la crítica literaria ha de fijarse en las formas que aparecen en la superficie del texto y tratar de desvelar los sentidos cifrados que encierran las imágenes literarias. La crítica literaria, según Bachelard (1988: 320), «n'a pas pour fonction de *rationaliser la littérature*. Si elle veut être à la hauteur de l'imagination littéraire, elle doit étudier aussi bien l'expression *exubérante* que l'expression *retenue*. /.../ la critique littéraire doit connaître les excès de l'expression délirante». En sus últimos libros sobre la imaginación creadora — sobre todo, *La poétique de l'espace* (1957), *La poétique de la rêverie* (1961) y el póstumo e inacabado *Fragments d'une poétique du feu* (1988) —, Bachelard abandona de manera progresiva determinados conceptos freudianos, reconoce las limitaciones y las insuficiencias de sus estudios anteriores sobre los cuatro elementos materiales para elaborar una metafísica de la imaginación e intuye la posibilidad de avanzar por caminos inexplorados hasta entonces; si en sus obras

precedentes se había limitado a fomentar la ensoñación a partir del estudio de unas determinadas imágenes, ahora contempla la posibilidad de formular una fenomenología de la imaginación que ilumine filosóficamente el problema de la imagen poética, aboga por la idea de que la poesía funda un reino particular dentro del lenguaje y se encuentra en condiciones de «esbozar una Poética del lenguaje, mostrar que la Poesía instituye un lenguaje autónomo y que tiene sentido hablar de una estética del lenguaje» (Bachelard 1992: 42). Lamentablemente, no dispuso del tiempo suficiente para desarrollar y culminar estas investigaciones.

De este modo, un apartado destacado e influyente del pensamiento bachelardiano es el análisis que lleva a cabo de las formas de la imaginación, singularmente las imágenes relacionadas con los temas de la materia, la fuerza, la voluntad, el movimiento y el ensueño, así como las imágenes asociadas a los cuatro elementos materiales de los que, según el presocrático Empédocles, procedían todas las cosas: el fuego, el agua, el aire y la tierra<sup>1</sup>. Todavía el último Bachelard — el de *La poétique de l'espace* y sus libros posteriores — reconoce que la formulación de una filosofía completa de la imaginación literaria exigiría abordar el problema de la composición del poema como una agrupación de múltiples y heterogéneas imágenes (Bachelard 1994a), requeriría, más que un mero estudio de la diversidad de las imágenes, un análisis del poema «concebido como una cooperación de la imagen y la idea» (Bachelard 1992: 36), puesto que el instante poético responde muy frecuentemente a la conciencia de una ambivalencia entre la pasión y la razón: «En el instante apasionado del poeta siempre hay un poco de razón; en la negativa razonada siempre queda un poco de pasión» (Bachelard 1985a: 227). En 1957, fecha de publicación de la primera edición de *La poétique de l'espace*, Bachelard era ya una personalidad reconocida como autor de libros tanto de epistemología, historia y filosofía de las ciencias como de poética y crítica literaria. Por lo tanto, tenía la experiencia y los conocimientos suficientes como para comenzar la redacción de ese texto con las siguientes palabras (Bachelard 1994a: 7):

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<sup>1</sup> Un primer acercamiento de quien esto escribe a ese pensamiento puede leerse en Saldaña (1999).



Un filósofo que ha formado todo su pensamiento adhiriéndose a los temas fundamentales de la filosofía de las ciencias, que ha seguido tan claramente el eje del racionalismo activo, el eje del racionalismo creciente de la ciencia contemporánea, debe olvidar su saber, romper con todos sus hábitos de investigación filosófica si quiere estudiar los problemas planteados por la imaginación poética.

En efecto, estamos ante un Bachelard cuyo centro de interés se ha desplazado sensiblemente desde el análisis de la objetividad de los acontecimientos hacia la búsqueda de la subjetividad que los genera. Es el Bachelard que se propone estudiar los problemas suscitados por la imaginación poética quien ahora afirma: «Describir un ensueño *objetivamente* es ya disminuirlo y detenerlo. ¡Cuántos sueños contados objetivamente no son ya más que onirismo en polvo!» (Bachelard 1994a: 188). En obras como *La psychanalyse du feu*, *L'eau et les rêves*, *L'air et les songes*, *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* y *La terre et les rêveries du repos* incluye Bachelard numerosas referencias a la literatura occidental (sobre todo a autores de la modernidad: Goethe, Novalis, Edgar Allan Poe, Coleridge, William Blake, Keats, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Nerval, Mallarmé, Rilke, Artaud, etc.) para ilustrar los mecanismos con que actúa la imaginación, y son únicamente esas referencias las que le permiten «pasar de la psicología de la ensoñación común a la psicología de la ensoñación literaria» (Bachelard, 1994: 35). Al igual que el sueño y el pensamiento hablan, esa otra actividad humana que es la imaginación también tiende a materializarse en actos de lenguaje y, de este modo, encuentra uno de sus campos de acción privilegiados en la literatura, allí donde precisamente la palabra adquiere conciencia de su propio valor: «el verdadero dominio para estudiar la imaginación no es la pintura, es la obra literaria, es la palabra, es la frase» (ib. 280). Y en otro lugar escribe Bachelard (1987: 283–284): «L'imagination s'enchant de l'image littéraire. La littérature n'est donc le succédané d'aucune autre activité. Elle achève un désir humain. Elle représente une *émergence* de l'imagination», es decir, la literatura se presenta para Bachelard (1992) como un territorio perfectamente delimitado de la imaginación activa y el

poeta y su lector comparten una suerte de complicidad a través de la imaginación: «Un lector que imagina recibe un impulso de imaginación de un poeta que vive de imaginar» (Bachelard 1992: 37).

Mientras que para el filósofo realista y para el psicólogo común la percepción de las imágenes determina los procesos de la imaginación, ésta es para Bachelard algo que debe diferenciarse claramente de la percepción del mundo exterior traducida en imágenes; según los primeros, no se puede imaginar algo que previamente no se haya visto, es decir, la imaginación combina partes de la realidad percibida y recuerdos de la realidad vivida; estamos ante un tipo de imaginación reproductora, dominante en las culturas realistas basadas en la consigna de *ver bien* (Bachelard 1988). Frente a ella, Bachelard — a la luz de los primeros románticos alemanes — aboga por una imaginación fundamentalmente creadora orientada hacia el *soñar bien*; para ello, trata de establecer una tesis basada en «le caractère primitif, le caractère psychiquement fondamental de l'imagination créatrice» (ib. 3)<sup>2</sup>. La imaginación creadora nos seduce con su extraordinario poder de evocación, nos libera del conocimiento sensible de las cosas y nos ayuda a desprendernos de lo que vemos a simple vista en favor de lo que imaginamos: «la imaginación reproductora enmascara y entorpece a la imaginación creadora» (Bachelard 1994: 280). Percibir e imaginar, escribe Bachelard (1987: 10), «sont aussi antithétiques que présence et absence. Imaginer c'est s'absenter, c'est s'élancer vers une vie nouvelle». La imaginación creadora no es, de este modo, un mero reflejo pasivo de las imágenes recibidas del mundo exterior, sino una actividad sujeta a la particular voluntad de cada individuo: «l'image a une double réalité: une réalité psychique et une réalité physique» (Bachelard 1988: 5).

Bachelard — lo repite insistentemente en distintos lugares de su obra — quiere invitarnos a imaginar a la vez que pretende analizar los productos de esa voluntad creativa que es la imaginación,

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<sup>2</sup> Este camino ya había sido explorado por Kant en la *Crítica del juicio*, una obra que, según G. Durand (1970: 20), «réserve l'avenir d'une réalité spirituelle créatrice qui échappe, par son acte même, aux antinomies de la raison».

unos productos que no pueden predecirse ni explicarse teniendo en cuenta sólo el mero y simple conocimiento de la realidad, una realidad que — ahora ya lo sabemos — no se encuentra tanto en los objetos en sí mismos como en la imagen que de esos objetos se refleja en la interioridad del pensador o del soñador; y es que, de alguna manera, los resortes con que actúa la imaginación son autónomos y escapan a los dominios de la ciencia. Al someterse a la voluntad, la imaginación se encuentra mucho más relacionada con la ensoñación (*rêverie*), con la fantasía semiconsciente que con los procesos inconscientes del sueño (*rêve*), lo que sitúa a Bachelard más próximo a los arquetipos junguianos que a las teorías psicoanalíticas freudianas. No obstante, esas teorías dejaron una considerable huella en dos obras bachelardianas de 1938: *La formation de l'esprit scientifique*, uno de sus textos epistemológicos más importantes, y *La psychanalyse du feu*, obra que inaugura sus estudios sobre la imaginación creadora; en cualquier caso, dichas teorías son manejadas con una gran libertad y combinadas con otras propias y de algunos discípulos díscolos de Freud, sobre todo de C. G. Jung y Alfred Adler.

Por consiguiente, es preciso diferenciar la imaginación del pensamiento; mientras que la primera configura imágenes, el segundo produce conceptos, y aun dentro de la imaginación es necesario distinguir entre, por un lado, una imaginación reproductora, una imaginación creadora y una imaginación imaginante y, resultados de estas imaginaciones, unas imágenes percibidas, unas imágenes creadas y unas imágenes imaginadas (Bachelard 1988); éstas últimas son «des sublimations des archétypes plutôt que des reproductions de la réalité» (ib. 4). Del mismo modo que el horizonte de la imaginación se ensancha gracias al surrealismo, que aparece con el fin de reavivar y potenciar las imágenes, el pensamiento también se enriquece debido a un cierto surracionalismo encargado de airear unos conceptos sancionados muchas veces por una tradición basada en el uso, la costumbre y el canon. El surrealismo dejó una huella imborrable no sólo en muchos artistas sino también en algunos pensadores que encontraron en él un balón de oxígeno con el que ensanchar los horizontes de explicación de un mundo demasiado estrecho, vuelto de espaldas al sueño y a la imaginación. Bachelard, Georges Bataille, Jacques



Lacan y Jean Paul Sartre — que publica *L'Imagination*, en 1937, y *L'Imaginaire*, en 1938 — son algunos de estos pensadores.

Aunque el primer compromiso explícito de G. Bachelard con la imaginación material lo encontramos en la redacción de *La psychanalyse du feu*, obra publicada en 1938, sus intereses filosóficos y sus intentos de elaborar una metafísica de la imaginación datan de unos cuantos años antes. En efecto, recordemos que ya en 1919 inició estudios de Filosofía de los que se licenció un año después por la Universidad de Dijon, que en 1922 completó su *agrégation* en Filosofía y que cinco años después presentó su tesis doctoral — publicada en 1928 con el título de *Essai sur la connaissance approchée* —, en la que defendía que conceptos como *verdad* y *realidad* deben ser enriquecidos con nuevos sentidos provenientes de una filosofía de lo imaginario. Por otra parte, a partir de su entrada en la Sorbona en 1940 su interés por el estudio de la imaginación creadora aumenta sin cesar. Imparte una serie de cursos sobre metafísica de la imaginación y publica un buen número de obras que así lo atestiguan: *Lautréamont* (1940), *L'eau et les rêves: essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (1942), *L'air et les songes: essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (1943), *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté: essai sur l'imagination des forces* y *La terre et les rêveries du repos: essai sur les images de l'intimité*, ambas de 1948, *La poétique de l'espace* (1957), *La poétique de la rêverie* y *La flamme d'une chandelle*, publicadas las dos en 1961, y *Le droit de rêver*, colección póstuma de diversos trabajos aparecida en 1970. Aunque publicará todavía algunos otros — *La philosophie du non* (1940), *Le rationalisme appliqué* (1949), *L'activité rationaliste de la physique contemporaine* (1951), *Le matérialisme rationnel* (1953) —, la mayor parte de sus libros científicos y epistemológicos ya habían visto la luz con anterioridad a 1940.

Esto nos permite hablar de un Bachelard científico y epistemólogo y de otro Bachelard filósofo de la imaginación creadora, de un Bachelard, como él mismo reconocería en su libro póstumo *Fragments d'une poétique du feu*, cuya vida profesional se había desdoblado «en dos partes casi independientes, una bajo el signo del concepto, otra bajo el de la imagen» (Bachelard 1992: 40). Se trata, en todo caso, de diferentes manifestaciones de un mismo

sistema de pensamiento en el que la ciencia y la poesía resultan complementarias; al leer las obras de Bachelard nos adentramos por senderos en donde confluyen la imaginación y el pensamiento, la fantasía y la inteligencia, la pasión y la razón, el sueño y la reflexión, las imágenes y las ideas. Con Bachelard, la imaginación alcanza unas cotas de libertad que una tradición de pensamiento psicologista y experimental le había negado, manteniéndola presa de la memoria y la percepción. De desempeñar un mero papel reproductor pasa a convertirse en motor de transformación y creación de imágenes. Como escribe en *L'eau et les rêves*: «La imaginación no es, como lo sugiere la etimología, la facultad de formar imágenes de la realidad; es la facultad de formar imágenes que sobrepasan la realidad, que *cantan* la realidad. Es una facultad de sobrehumanidad» (Bachelard 1994: 31), una idea sobre la que insiste en *L'air et les songes*:

On veut toujours que l'imagination soit la faculté de *former* des images. Or elle est plutôt la faculté de *déformer* les images fournies par la perception, elle est surtout la faculté de nous libérer des images premières, de *changer* les images. (Bachelard 1987: 7)

Así pues, desprendiéndose de ese lastre heredado de la tradición del realismo clásico, la imaginación no sólo forma y deforma las imágenes suministradas por la percepción que da el contacto directo con la experiencia, sino que también es capaz de liberarnos de las imágenes primeras, apegadas a la experiencia y a la naturaleza constitutiva de los hechos. Sujeto que imagina, objeto imaginado y acción imaginante constituyen los pivotes sobre los que bascula una filosofía de lo imaginario en la que la imaginación se basa en la unión inesperada de imágenes y se presenta como la *facultad de lo posible*, en acertada expresión de uno de los discípulos más destacados de Bachelard, Gilbert Durand (1982). Hablamos, pues, de filosofía de lo imaginario y no de filosofía de la imagen puesto que, como ha escrito el propio Bachelard (1987: 7): «Le vocable fondamental qui correspond à l'imagination, ce n'est pas *image*, c'est *imaginaire*». El valor poético y expresivo de una imagen se encuentra íntimamente ligado a su capacidad de evocación imaginaria y lo imaginario hace que la imaginación

ensanche las fronteras de la realidad y se convierta en un territorio abierto, anhelado por los exploradores de lo desconocido.

*La psychanalyse du feu* señala el paso del conocimiento científico al conocimiento poético: «Il s'agit en effet de trouver l'action des valeurs inconscientes à la base même de la connaissance empirique et scientifique» (Bachelard 1990: 27), el abandono del sueño (*rêve*) y su sustitución por la ensoñación (*rêverie*), elementos muy diferentes entre sí: «cette rêverie est extrêmement différent du rêve pour cela même qu'elle est toujours plus ou moins centrée sur un objet. Le rêve chemine linéairement, oubliant son chemin en courant. La rêverie travaille en étoile. Elle revient à son centre pour lancer de nouveaux rayons» (ib. 36)<sup>3</sup>. Esta obra, base de posteriores trabajos sobre la imaginación creadora, debía «préparer des instruments pour une critique littéraire objective dans le sens le plus précis du terme» (ib. 185), a la vez que mostrar que el espíritu poético se materializa en una sintaxis de metáforas y que «il n'y a pas de floraison poétique sans une certaine synthèse d'images poétiques» (ib.).

Ahora bien, la verdadera entrada de Bachelard en la crítica literaria se produce con el ensayo que dedica a Lautréamont en 1940, en el que se propone una doble finalidad: determinar en *Les Chants de Maldoror* el fulminante vigor del enlace temporal y esclarecer un complejo particularmente enérgico, el *complejo de la vida animal* (Bachelard 1985). No es ninguna casualidad que Bachelard dedique un ensayo a Lautréamont, un autor, por cierto, reivindicado junto a Rimbaud por los surrealistas, quienes, a su vez, tanto interés mostraron por los sueños y la imaginación. Recordemos ahora que, según Bachelard, la imagen que mejor representa la relación de los descubrimientos científicos del presente con los hallazgos del pasado no es la continuidad sino la discontinuidad, la ruptura, la quiebra. Bachelard presenta la obra de Lautréamont como una poesía de la excitación, de la impulsión muscular, como una «verdadera *fenomenología de la agresión*. Es *agresión pura*, en el estilo mismo en que se ha dicho *poesía pura*»

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<sup>3</sup> De este modo, no me parece acertada la opinión de G. Poulet (1984), según la cual «Bachelard s'enfonce dans le rêve, ou plutôt dans une profonde et incertaine méditation de type onirique» (ib. 141).



(ib. 8). Maldoror es de este modo un ser violento, un ser agresivo, un ser contaminado de animalidad que impone el ritmo de sus propias coordenadas temporales. Sin embargo, Bachelard no se contenta con leer el texto de Lautréamont como un poema de la agresión; es preciso superar al propio Lautréamont, transformar su fuerza de expansión en «una *poesía del proyecto* que abre verdaderamente la imaginación» (ib. 139). En este sentido, Bachelard (1985) considera que *Les Chants de Maldoror* se caracterizan porque están recorridos por una *línea de fuerza* de la imaginación que parte de la materia animada, atraviesa espacios oníricos y desemboca en la conciencia de una libertad espiritual desbordada.

Tras *du feu* y el texto sobre Lautréamont, Bachelard dedica otras cuatro obras a la imaginación material, centrándose en los restantes tres elementos que el pensamiento antiguo situaba en la base de todas las cosas. Estas obras son — recordémoslo — *L'eau et les rêves*, *L'air et les songes*, *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* y *La terre et les rêveries du repos*. Así pues, Bachelard (1994) considera que es posible establecer en el ámbito de lo imaginario una *ley de los cuatro elementos* que clasifique las diversas imaginaciones materiales según se vinculen al fuego, al agua, al aire o a la tierra. Más aún, pone en relación con estos elementos materiales los sueños de los cuatro temperamentos orgánicos de los que se habla desde la Antigüedad en abundantes obras de la tradición occidental; así, los biliosos, los pituitosos, los sanguíneos y los melancólicos son respectivamente caracterizados porque sus sueños se centran con preferencia en el fuego, el agua, el aire y la tierra. Aunque en la constitución de una imagen particular pueden concurrir diversos y muy variados elementos, esta «loi des quatre imaginations matérielles» (Bachelard 1987: 14) pone en relación cada uno de los cuatro elementos con una particular imaginación creadora. Fuego, agua, aire y tierra se agrupan en ocasiones en un mismo texto y responden al tópico de presentar la vida como suma de contrarios.

En *L'eau et les rêves* comienza advirtiéndolo que una filosofía de lo imaginario «debe antes que nada estudiar las relaciones de la causalidad material con la causalidad formal» (Bachelard 1994: 10) y, de este modo, distingue entre una *imaginación formal*, mímica, y una *imaginación material*, creadora, y trata de determinar

tanto la sustancia de las imágenes poéticas como la adecuación de las formas a las materias fundamentales (Bachelard 1994). La auténtica imaginación creadora, según Bachelard, adquiere cuerpo en alguna de estas materias fundamentales y es capaz de producir dos clases de imágenes poéticas: unas que propician el dinamismo, el movimiento y la ensoñación (el fuego, el agua clara, el agua corriente, el agua violenta, el vuelo, las alas, la caída, el viento, etc.) y otras que incitan a la reflexión y el descanso o desencadenan la voluntad transformadora (la tierra, el agua profunda, el agua estancada, etc.). Mientras que las fuerzas ligadas a la imaginación formal — estudiadas tradicionalmente por los psicólogos de la imaginación — se concentran en la novedad, la sorpresa, el acontecimiento inesperado y lo extraño, las fuerzas vinculadas a la imaginación material «ahondan en el fondo del ser; quieren encontrar en el ser a la vez lo primitivo y lo eterno. Dominan lo temporal y la historia» (ib. 7). Así se entiende que «La Beauté» de Baudelaire sea «comme un rêve de pierre» y que su seno se encuentre capacitado para inspirar al poeta un amor «Éternel et muet ainsi que la matière» (Baudelaire 1968: 53). Estas imágenes de la materia son los elementos que permanecen, piensa Bachelard, una vez que nos hemos desprendido de «las formas perecederas, las vanas imágenes, el devenir de las superficies» (Bachelard 1994: 8) y que, en definitiva, nos pueden ayudar a «ir a la raíz misma de la fuerza imaginante» (ib. 9).

En tanto elemento material, el agua nos proporciona un tipo particular de imaginación y se presenta — más que como el destino de las imágenes que se escapan y los sueños que no se materializan — como «un destino esencial que sin cesar transforma la sustancia del ser» (ib. 15). Y es que el agua simboliza la transitoriedad, el cambio permanente, el vértigo y la caída, el movimiento y la transformación, la vida y la muerte. El elemento líquido — bien en forma de lagos, bien en forma de ríos — suele ser puerta de entrada a otros mundos (así la laguna Estigia, el lago de Pergusa, los ríos Aqueronte, Piriflegetonte, Cocito, Aornis y Leteo) dado que la muerte se explica míticamente en muchas culturas como un viaje desplegado a través del agua: «O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!», escribe Baudelaire (1968: 124) en su poema «Le voyage», y escenario de experiencias

de iniciación, como la que narra Wordsworth en *The Prelude*. El agua es, en palabras de Bachelard (1994: 15), «la metamorfosis ontológica esencial entre el fuego y la tierra. El ser consagrado al agua es un ser en el vértigo. Muere a cada minuto, sin cesar algo de su sustancia se derrumba». Más arriba ya he señalado que no resulta raro encontrar en un mismo texto la presencia conjunta de algunos de estos elementos, dado que, por ejemplo, el agua y la tierra comparten un punto de contacto en la playa, la costa, la ribera.

Bachelard amplía sus investigaciones sobre la imaginación literaria en *L'air et les songes*, donde señala que una imagen desprovista de su componente imaginario, una imagen inmóvil, estable y fosilizada por el uso «*coupe les ailes à l'imagination*» (Bachelard 1987: 8) y comienza refiriéndose a la movilidad como una de las características más acusadas de las imágenes aéreas que analiza, imágenes que deben alcanzar un cierto grado de originalidad para convertirse en literarias. Como consecuencia de la voluntad y la ensoñación, la imagen literaria ha de dotar a la palabra de nuevos matices, nuevos sentidos, ha de conseguir que la palabra signifique otra cosa, que quien lea esa palabra experimente sueños inéditos, y ello sin olvidar en ningún momento que «*l'image littéraire doit s'enrichir d'un onirisme nouveau*» (ib. 283). De este modo, una imagen literaria será tanto más potente y extraordinaria cuanto mayor sea la capacidad que demuestre para evocarnos mundos distintos del mundo que directamente nombra la palabra. A esa capacidad de evocación que nos sitúa en la senda de la libertad y de la luz se refiere Baudelaire. En su poema «*Élévation*» aconseja a su espíritu: «*Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides; /Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur, /Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur, /Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides*» (Baudelaire 1968: 46). Como escribe G. Bachelard (1987: 284-285):

Une image littéraire suffit parfois à nous transporter d'un univers dans un autre. C'est en cela que l'image littéraire apparaît comme la fonction la plus novatrice du langage. Le langage évolue par ses images beaucoup plus que par son effort sémantique.



En resumen, si más arriba he señalado que, según Bachelard, la movilidad es una de las cualidades inherentes de las imágenes aéreas, ahora debemos recordar que es precisamente la imagen literaria la que enriquece a las palabras, dotándolas de movimiento y devolviéndolas su componente imaginario. El aire, como señaló Baudelaire, contiene un elemento de purificación y nos ayuda a liberarnos de una realidad en ocasiones excesivamente corrompida y desagradable. Así, no resulta raro que en ese deseo de purificación y limpieza el poeta se decante por este elemento y aspire a fundirse con él. Con los poetas del aire recorreremos un trayecto de lo real a lo imaginario, experimentamos un movimiento de la imaginación protagonizado por esas realidades psíquicas que son las imágenes, verdaderos sujetos — y no complementos — del verbo *imaginar* (Bachelard 1987).

Bachelard continúa y culmina sus estudios sobre la imaginación creadora vinculada a los cuatro elementos tradicionales en *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* y *La terre et les rêveries du repos*, obras en las que sigue mostrando interés por la imagen literaria y su capacidad de creación de lenguaje: «toute nouvelle image littéraire est un texte original du langage» (Bachelard, 1988: 6). Así pues, en esa *explosion du langage* (Bachelard 1988) en que a veces se convierte la literatura, las palabras ya no son simples términos inamovibles y cerrados, ya no son sepulturas en donde encuentran fácil y placentero acomodo los pensamientos, son las depositarias del germen de la imaginación, que es tanto como decir del futuro y la libertad del ser humano: «La imaginación, en sus acciones vivas, nos desprende a la vez del pasado y de la realidad. Se abre en el porvenir» (Bachelard 1994a: 26–27). Ahora bien, mientras que en sus obras anteriores Bachelard se había enfrentado a la brillantez, movilidad y ligereza de las imágenes materiales asociadas al fuego, al agua y al aire, ahora fija su atención en la estabilidad, solidez y reposo de las imágenes terrestres, unas imágenes que estudia a la luz de determinadas dialécticas: dureza y suavidad, imaginación y voluntad, intimidad material e intimidad querellada, reposo y agitación. Bachelard (1988) comienza señalando que la materia terrestre se diferencia de los restantes tres elementos en que ofrece una resistencia a ser alterada mucho mayor que ellos. Así pues, esa resistencia únicamente puede ser vencida con la voluntad, el

esfuerzo y el trabajo del hombre, como el que al forjar lleva a cabo el herrero en el yunque, un oficio completo, a juicio de Bachelard (ib.), puesto que implica ensueños que conciernen a los cuatro elementos. Piedras, metales, minerales y cristales son otras materias terrestres de las que se ocupa Bachelard (ib.) que presentan distintos grados de dureza y suavidad y, lo que es más importante, provocan diferentes ensueños en el sujeto que imagina. Ese sujeto sabe muy bien que la materia no está muerta sino dormida y que es capaz de recuperar la vida tras la intervención de una conciencia imaginante. Gérard de Nerval, en «Vers dorés», de *Les Chimères*, escribe: «A la matière même un verbe est attaché/(...)/Souvent dans l'être obscur habite un Dieu caché;/Et comme un oeil naissant couvert par ses paupières,/Un pur esprit s'accroît sous l'écorce des pierres!» (Nerval 1974: 9). Por último, en la segunda de sus obras sobre la materia terrestre, Bachelard (1988a) analiza los valores oníricos de determinadas imágenes de la intimidad: la casa, el vientre, la gruta y el laberinto simbolizan, en mayor o menor medida, el refugio, el reposo y el alejamiento del peligro.

A partir de *La poétique de l'espace* (1957), Bachelard introduce un giro en sus estudios sobre la imaginación creadora. Se aleja de Freud, abandona sus trabajos basados en los cuatro elementos de la alquimia y adopta un vocabulario fenomenológico, esto es, se distancia de la objetividad que había caracterizado sus investigaciones anteriores sobre las imágenes de los cuatro elementos de la materia con el fin de practicar una explicación fenomenológica de las imágenes<sup>4</sup>; según Georges Poulet (1997), las propuestas de

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<sup>4</sup> Es cierto que en un momento dado Bachelard reconoce las insuficiencias que mostró el psicoanálisis para abordar con garantías el estudio de la imaginación creadora. Ahora bien, de ahí a señalar, como hace A. Blanch (1996: 32), que Bachelard «tuvo que reconocer su error al haber intentado explicar las imágenes del fuego desde el psicoanálisis», hay un abismo. Bachelard nunca, ni siquiera en *La psychanalyse du feu*, actuó como un psicoanalista ortodoxo. Más aún, en esa misma obra, publicada en 1938, se refiere ya a los valores fenomenológicos del fuego. Jean Onimus (1971), refiriéndose a Bachelard, escribe: «ce qui rend son évolution exemplaire, c'est la conscience qu'il a prise peu à peu de l'autonomie de l'imagination et de l'impossibilité radicale de l'enfermer dans le jeu des structures de

análisis bachelardianos constituyen una sugerente y productiva aplicación de la fenomenología a la literatura, dado que la literatura «es justamente lo que el método bachelardiano alcanza y explora: un conjunto de imágenes que hay que aprehender en el acto mismo a través del cual la conciencia imaginadora las genera» (ib. 152). Y es que únicamente la fenomenología, señala ahora Bachelard (1994a), puede ayudarnos a comprender las imágenes como realidades específicas que surgen de una determinada conciencia individual creadora: «Sólo la fenomenología — es decir, la consideración del *surgir de la imagen* en una conciencia individual — puede ayudarnos a restituir la subjetividad de las imágenes y a medir la amplitud, la fuerza, el sentido de, la transubjetividad de la imagen» (Bachelard 1994a: 10). La fenomenología bachelardiana, afirma Jean-Yves Tadié '(1987: 112), «n'analyse donc plus un objet, mais un retentissement, non pas une répétition, mais un phénomène unique». Inauguración, innovación, creación: la imagen poética nos sitúa ante el problema de la creatividad que experimenta una conciencia imaginante transformada posteriormente en un ser que habla: «La imagen poética es una emergencia del lenguaje, [...] la poesía pone al lenguaje en estado de emergencia» (Bachelard 1994a: 18–19).

Un objetivo prioritario de los trabajos de Bachelard fue dotar de contenido al espíritu del hombre, una labor poco menos que imposible dado que dicho espíritu es pura vacuidad al ser pura libertad, una libertad que, afortunadamente, es compañera inseparable de las diversas actividades humanas (sueños, pensamiento, imaginación). La literatura, lo hemos recordado ya, era para Bachelard uno de los dominios privilegiados de la imaginación creadora, es, diríamos nosotros con Bachelard a intolerantes y dogmáticos, un territorio adecuado donde ejercer la libertad: «La poesía es el lenguaje que es libre respecto de sí mismo» (Bachelard 1992: 35), o bien: «la poesía contemporánea ha puesto la libertad en el cuerpo mismo del lenguaje. La poesía aparece entonces como un fenómeno de la libertad» (Bachelard 1994a: 19). Coincidente en gran

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l'inconscient freudien. C'est ainsi que, de l'explication psychanalytique [...], il est passé à la description phénoménologique de ce qu'il appelle 'la conscience imaginante' » (ib. 195).



medida con aquellos formalistas rusos que hicieron de la sorpresa y el extrañamiento las cualidades principales a que debía aspirar el lenguaje literario, Bachelard — bien es cierto que a través de otros itinerarios — no se cansa de afirmar que el objetivo prioritario de la literatura consiste en reanimar el lenguaje a través de la creación de nuevas imágenes (Bachelard 1988). Escribe Bachelard (1987: 283): «Signifier autre chose et faire rêver autrement, telle est la double fonction de l'image littéraire». De este modo, el lenguaje, siendo algo en sí mismo limitado, encierra el germen de una potencia incalculable, el esbozo de la geografía de un paisaje ilimitado, el reto de alcanzar y traspasar la última frontera.

Gaston Bachelard se adentró por un camino de desposesión de lo aparente en busca de lo esencial, supo que la realidad de los hechos — el universo objetivo — se asienta sobre unas bases enormemente frágiles no tanto en sí mismas como en la representación que el pensamiento y la imaginación hacen de ellas, es decir, concibió las cosas del mundo como fenómenos dinámicos que experimentan constantes deslizamientos, unos deslizamientos que se aprecian en las imágenes que nos hacemos de esas mismas cosas (de ahí que, llegado un momento, fuese plenamente consciente de la imposibilidad de la búsqueda de unos universales estéticos). Como todos los grandes pensadores a lo largo de la historia, no dejó en ningún momento de someter sus propias convicciones a unos principios de crítica, duda e indeterminación, principios de los que ha de arrancar cualquier actividad intelectual que tenga como meta el progreso. Alguien que tuvo la suficiente entereza moral e intelectual como para convivir con sus dudas, sus temores y sus vacilaciones y afirmar, después de haber trabajado tanto, próximo ya el tiempo de su edad final, que «querría volver a escribir todos mis libros» (Bachelard 1992: 35), parecía estar negándose a sí mismo el merecido derecho a ocupar un lugar en la historia del pensamiento. Alguien que pensó que el trabajo del estudioso consiste fundamentalmente en una actividad que se lleva a cabo en soledad, tenía que morir sin haber fundado una escuela que prolongase su propio pensamiento. No obstante, su magisterio directo o indirecto no podía resultar indiferente a algunos espíritus fascinados por los enigmas de la imaginación creadora, que se acercaron a sus obras en busca de preguntas esenciales más que de

simples y cómodas respuestas. Gaston Bachelard fue un maestro que nunca impuso una férrea disciplina a sus discípulos, fue un soñador solitario esclavizado sólo por el poder de la imaginación.

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# Transgressing the Borders of the “Self” in Postmodern Poetry (with Observations about Estonian Poetry)

JÜRI TALVET

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## 1. Can Baroque or Romantic poetics describe Postmodern poetry?

Quite often in our postmodern age we come across assertions that the postmodern break of the 1970s and 80s has been something unparalleled in cultural history. The deconstructionist discourse initiated by Jacques Derrida, which has deeply echoed and strongly contributed to the collapse of the “great narratives” — likewise in ideology, politics, philosophy or the cultural and literary fields — has been compared with the Copernican revolution at the dawn of the Modern Age (Ray 1998: 76). Although the Bengali scholar who in this case is the author of the comparison has also seen in the philosophy of the *śabdatattva* (Word-Principle) of the ancient Indian writer Bhartṛhari (7<sup>th</sup> century) a worthy precedent for Derrida’s writing as *différance*, anticipating all spoken and inscribed language (ib. 84), the prevailing mood seems to consecrate postmodernity’s radical exceptionality as a discourse.

I am not going to reject that illusion. What I am trying to do is to caution against the tendency to convert the postmodern deconstruction itself into another “big narrative”, pushed by Western “centres”, and ignore, like all previous “great narratives” have done, the voices from peripheral and frontier areas. I shall also try to show the importance of deconstructive mechanisms in such types of historical (Western) culture like the Baroque and Ro-

manticism, which according to the conception of Yuri Lotman would belong to paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic cultural systems. The same is true of modernist (vanguard) culture which, in fact, has prefigured a number of basic features characteristic of postmodernism (cf. Kappanyos 1999, Saldaña 1999, Talme 1999).

Poetry has been defined in many different ways. Here I mean poetry as an intimate creative act, which is never a merely linguistic procedure, though it always comes into being in and through the linguistic space. "Language poetry", if ever such existed, would mean just putting a special stress on the linguistic factor or formal play, but in a broader sense any poetry — even in its crudest social or political expression — is language poetry. In the same way as formal or linguistic factors never manage to explain sufficiently the poetic essence — or, more exactly, poetic excellence —, a direct ascription of the poetic message to socio-economic circumstances would greatly simplify the state of things. Different poetic responses emerge from a similar socio-historical situation, while the landmarks of a "generation", a "school" or a "current" never erase individualities. And yet, no poetry, however universal, individual or "timeless", can entirely escape the impression of time and the circumstances in which it has been created. No poet can elude the active presence of a number of intertextualities in his work, starting from words, metric patterns, poetic tropes, and ending by motives, borrowed images, a conscious or a subconscious use of fragments from preceding texts. Likewise, the poetic act will remain always an existential one, even if it apparently pretends to be a mere linguistic exercise. The poet writing a poem faces implacably himself as a living and temporary being related to his circumstances, and the language by which he/ she works and (re)creates. Poetry remains polyfunctional, as its reading public varies synchronically and diachronically, in space and time. Poetry is a part of (human) reality, and as reality is ever changing, poetry can hardly be submitted to exhausting definitions.

Notwithstanding these postulates, which I believe would seem commonplaces to the majority of poets, if not critics, throughout history attempts have been made, both by poets, poets-critics and critics, to catch the evasive matter of poetic excellence. I shall

characterize briefly one of such attempts in the Baroque, and devote some more space to similar endeavours in Romanticism, just because, as I mentioned above, there do exist paradigmatic parallels between these types of historical culture and postmodernity (if not postmodernism), being at the same time considerably less studied than the relationship between modernism and postmodernity.

In the Baroque, the Spanish Jesuit priest and professor Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658) was not himself a poet, but was nevertheless deeply attracted by the poetic matter. Known far more for his philosophical treatises and miniatures (like *El discreto*, translated widely in the 18th-century France, *Oráculo manual*, enthusiastically echoed and translated by Arthur Schopenhauer, and his highly original allegoric-emblematic novel *El crítico*), his analysis of the principles of poetic creation in *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* (1647) has by later criticism mostly been overlooked or simply reduced to an exposition of poetic tropes and means in which his contemporary Baroque poets used to excel and compete with each other in wit and ingenuity.

In some previous writings I have tried to show that much more than that is hidden in Gracián's *agudeza*. In fact, while it is often thought that the Baroque did not possess a literary theory of its own, I would claim, on the contrary, that Gracián's work is a splendid piece of Baroque literary criticism, reflecting the very core of Baroque aesthetics (complex contrasts and antitheses, allegory and symbolism, emblematics, etc.). Here, however, I am going a little further, shifting the stress from the specifically Baroque qualities of his analysis to features which have to do with the universal patterns of poetry. These features can be at the same time characterized both as deconstructing and transgressing the borders of the (poetic) self. They concord with Gracián's philosophy in which relativity and dichotomic-dialectical complexity of existence are the major signs.

In the extensive First chapter of *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* Gracián describes the general features of *agudeza*, and then proceeds to comment on the poetic examples drawn from the work of his contemporaries (Góngora, Lope de Vega, Quevedo, Villamediana, etc.), Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Renaissance poets



(Garcilaso de la Vega, Luis de León, Montemayor, Camões), as well as ancient Roman poets (of Iberian origin, like Marcial and Lucan). The scope of his selection itself is an indication that Gracián had in mind something farther-fetching than describing a set of poetic means suited to his time. *Agudeza* appears as a creative poetic principle, by which conceits (*conceptos*) are created. The *conceptos* emerge from "un acto de entendimiento, que exprime la correspondencia que se halla entre los objetos" (Gracián 1974: 14). Further we learn that the conceptual *agudeza*, based on the subtlety of thinking (*sutileza del pensar*) can be differentiated from the verbal *agudeza*, which is rather centred on word plays (ib.16). Gracián deals above all with the conceptual *agudeza*, because as he observes: "if that [*agudeza de concepto* — J. T.] is taken away, no soul is left; while these [*agudezas verbales* — J. T.] cannot be translated into other languages /.../" (ib.) He then proceeds to describe in detail numerous ways of *agudeza incompleja*, which emerges from "a single act, but with a plurality of formalities and extremities that complete the artifice and found the correlation /.../, and *agudeza compuesta*, which means a series or a larger set of such acts in the relationship of a discourse (*trabazón de un discurso*) (ib. 18–19).

It is equally clear to Gracián that a creative mind (*ingenio*) should not, by means of *agudezas* and conceits, aspire merely to truths or judgements, but to beauty, as he says: "No se contenta el ingenio con sola la verdad, como el juicio, sino que aspira a la hermosura." (ib.13). This statement definitely proves that Gracián had in mind something more general than the creation of ingenious or witty associations, which is regarded as the main source of the current of *conceptismo* in the "Golden Age" of Spanish letters. It is more or less clear that he speaks of the principles of poetic craft in the broadest sense. I think the same is true of the notion of the extremes (*extremos*), which is repeated throughout his writing. The conceptual correlations or conceits created by *agudezas* are based on the association of the extremes, but these in fact do not mean so much oppositions on one and the same plane of cognition, but rather the introduction of different (and oppositional) planes of cognition (*extremos conoscibles*) in a poem (ib. 22). The most important principle is, in fact, the variety of the poetic matter,

which seems to be the substantial source of all dynamics in poetry. Or as Gracián himself in his conceptual manner, playing with semi-rhyming words, states: "La uniformidad limita, la variedad dilata /.../" (Ib. 15).

Gracián certainly could not escape the pressure of the general mentality of his time. As the contradiction of the sensual and worldly appearance and the religious or spiritual essence was the great theme of the Spanish Baroque, — being widely echoed in the work of his contemporary writers — it could not not manifest itself also in the background of Gracián's conception of poetic creation. However, in Gracián these oppositional planes are seldom conceived as absolute or, in definite terms, mutually excluding. What is important, is just their co-existence in a text, and an interior (hidden, almost mysterious) "border" created by them. The excellence or greatness of a poem emanates from the introduction by *agudeza* of these different cognitive planes (or matters), the "border" dividing them and an almost secret movement around and across the latter. The "border" is never quite devoid of ambiguities and hybrid features, its basic nature is, as Lotman has stressed, its capability of a dialogue.

The movement or the "shift" has mostly a paradoxical character, i.e. it includes such notions as suddenness, unpredictability, surprise. It is quite congenial with the notion of the "explosion" and the subsequent qualitative "leap", used by Yuri Lotman to describe the dynamics in and between cultural systems (cf. above all, Lotman 1992). Thus, I would assert that while Lotman speaks of "explosions" and "leaps" in macrocosmic processes, Gracián comments on similar transitions, turns and shifts on the intimate microcosmic level of a poetic text. I would further claim that these processes are mutually connected. A great concentration of the micropoetic dynamic may become the cause of revolutionary changes in the cultural or even social conscience. Its effects may not be revealed at once, but by a coincidence of historical premises, maybe several centuries later. The rediscovery of Baroque poetry (Donne, Góngora) by the European Vanguard poets, like T. S. Eliot, García Lorca and their generation, could serve as an example.

In our postmodern days the Baroque poetics and Gracián are, on the whole, simply being ignored, forgotten — as something remote, having little to do with the idea of modernity. Thus one of the pioneering postmodernists, Jorge Luis Borges, on several occasions expressed his dissatisfaction with the philosophy of Gracián, who seemed to him to have failed to meditate on “truly eternal things”. Indeed, Gracián’s poetics rather foresees a close linkage and movement between the eternal (ideal, spiritual, imaginal) and the practical (material, trivial, earthly). (The same, paradoxically, seems to be the very source of the spell in Borges’ own work).

Romantic poetry, on the contrary, has often been seen as an authentic binary opposition to postmodernism. As well as the early modernist-symbolist revolt against the passion of Romantic rhetoric, postmodernist poetry is known for its adoration of distance, irony, sophisticated mind-games, rejection of sentiment and “fundamental” feelings, i.e. features directly opposite to those generally ascribed to Romanticism. As the Austrian poet Heidi Pataki (b. 1940) has resumed (at least) in (some of) “Eleven Theses about Poetry”, as early as in 1968 (Pataki 1986: 291–292):

1. Poems must reflect current consciousness. 2. Lyric is a kind of fashion. 3. Individualism is antiquated. 4. Originality is nonsense. 7. One can no longer write a new poem. 8. Language has become unusable. 9. The world breaks down into aggressions. Sadism is the most vital form of human communication. Only when we hurt the other person do we notice him/her. The rest is convention. 10. /.../ In place of experience cliché has stepped in. Clichés are the material of the poem. 11. Literature is a game of language. It differs in no way from car racing, chain smoking, cooking rice, or visiting a museum. Literature is a way of life. Not necessarily the most interesting way, but it passes the time.

In his recent interesting study *Logofagias* (1998), the Spanish scholar Túa Blesa has exhaustively analyzed and described, almost in the same vein of his Aragon compatriot Gracián, a great variety



of formal plays and witty games with intertextualities (mainly) in the Spanish poetry of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One may get the impression that the hitherto marginal poetic discourse has now definitely become one of the mainstreams. Indeed, it might be so, but then — what is left of its spell of marginality?

It is not my purpose here to recapitulate in detail the features of the fundamental change in European (if not universal) consciousness brought about by Romanticism. I would just like to stress my conviction that if a genuine epitome is needed for Lotman's theory of cultural or semiospheric "explosions" and subsequent "leaps", Romanticism, with its overabundance of the creative genius, would serve the best. Beside the great discoveries of historical-cultural sensibility and relativity, the medieval popular culture, etc., we owe to the Romantics a huge "leap" toward the understanding of the "other" in practically every sense (native and aboriginal cultures, Oriental and minority cultures, marginal groups, including creative women, etc.). One can definitely assert that the scope of the dialogue with the "other" and the dialogical "border zone" envisaged by the Romantics, was much more intense and much broader than those emerging from today's postmodern theories (which, for instance, have paid little if any attention to the (aesthetic) significance of the literature of national and ethnic minorities and the linguistic sphere outside the traditional occidentocentric tradition).

If the romantic age was truly exceptional in transgressing the borders of the West-European "self" towards "outside" where the "other" was discovered and a comprehensive dialogue with was established, the movement towards "inside" is equally noteworthy. Metatextual/critical discourse was often brought into the very "self" of a creative spirit. The border between the sensuous and mythical, on the one hand, and the abstract and cerebral, on the other, became especially "hidden" and ambiguous or, to use Lotman's terms, exemplarily semiospheric, capable of procreating unpredictable "explosions". What I mean is that several of the most influential metapoetical discourses in Romanticism were initiated by great poets themselves (Schiller, Goethe, Wordsworth, Hölderlin and Shelley, as the best examples), while other theorists,

like Herder and Friedrich Schlegel, though not being necessarily great poets, were definitely creative writers themselves).

Let me now examine some of the points in their metapoetical discourses, which in my opinion by far exceed a specifically romantic framework, having significance — contrary to what might be conjectured in the mainstream postmodern theoretical light — for our turn-of-the-millennium poetry. Thus I do not think any poet of postmodernity (or of whatever age) can escape completely the fundamental dilemmas of a poet enlightened in his *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, in 1795, by the great German pre-Romantic Friedrich Schiller. As is known, Schiller rejects there the submission of the poetic mind to both extremes — savage nature (pure materialism), as well as intellect or reason (which would result in didactics). In a genuine poetic creation, as Schiller claims, both extremes are overcome, while in this process, ludicrous elements have an important role. This statement, though later echoed both by Poe (*The Poetic Principle*) and Joyce (*The Portrait of the Artist*) still proceeds from a classicist ideal and has little if anything to do with the interior dynamics of poetry. However, in his *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 1795/1796, Schiller came very close to the point. In what he ingeniously called “simple” or “naïve” poetry — let alone Schiller’s specific philosophical interpretation of it — we can see the deep source of the impressionist principle in all poetry: the sensuous reality is considered self-sufficient to convey the authentic feeling of totality. “Sentimental” poetry, on the contrary, intuits reality’s insufficiency, and considers it to be the poet’s duty to make ideals (thoughts, ideas, mental abstractions and generalizations) stand out. This would be the deep expressionist source in all poetry.

I think these two principles struggle in every poet, even though poets, naturally, may have a propensity to one of them. What I consider important is that Schiller here, like Gracián before him, speaks of the blending of the two principles in an ideal contemporary poet (Goethe) and accepts the interior variety of a poem as a guarantee of its outstanding qualities.

Only two years later, the German *Frühromantiker* Friedrich Schlegel, in the famous Fragment 116 of his *Fragmente* (1798)

repeats this idea of Gracián and Schiller in a far more radical way, coming quite close to our postmodern *licentia poetica*, which has been interpreted by many as the absence of any *licentia*. It is quite clear that Schlegel does not speak here of romantic poetry, but envisages an ideal for the poetic renovation and search of any time. His "romantic poetry" which is at the same time "*eine progressive Universalpoesie*", has to and can blend poetry and prose, geniality and criticism, artificial poetry (*Kunstpoesie*) and natural poetry (*Naturpoesie*), make poetry vital and social, as well as life and society poetic, poeticize wits and fill and satiate artistic forms with an authentic material of any kind, and animate them by the vibrations of humour. It comprises everything that is poetic, from great artistic systems, capable of containing in their turn multiple systems, to a sigh and kiss that a child, composing a poem without art, exhales. /---/ Other types of poetry are ready and can be analyzed now in their completeness (*vollständig*). The romantic kind of poetry is in the process of becoming; it is in its very essence to be always a becoming, and it is never finished. /---/ The romantic type of poetry is the only type that is more than a type, being at the same time poetic art itself; in a sense, all poetry is or should be romantic."

Are these definitions not valid for postmodern poetry? I do not think so. The clash between conservative postmodernists and renovating postmodernists — or, as I have in a previous work defined them, transmodernists — is already very much felt in the air. The Spanish researcher Alfredo Saldaña (1997: 5) makes a clear distinction between a passive, a-critical postmodernism, and a critical renovating postmodernism. The Chilean critic Ariel Fernández has voiced a sharp discontent with the depersonalizing and desacralizing mainstream in the postmodern Chilean *anti-poesía*, while looking forward, at the same time, to a new kind of poetry capable of expressing not only the superficial mass consciousness but the deep layers of multiple human responses to the vital "border" situations and tragedies of our time (Fernández 1999). Likewise, one can meet a sporadic discontent about the current poetic situation in US criticism. Thus, in Dick Allen's view: "/---/ if poetry is to become more than it is at the present, it will need to be narrative and dramatic poetry, stressing meaning



(social, political, scientific, philosophical, technological, etc.)” (Allen 1991: 78). “What is missing from our poetry, and what should be possible, is almost shocking to consider. Instead of satire (I think of Byron’s *Don Juan*, and of Pope), we have the wit and irony of the academic formalist lyric, the bombast of the Beat, the mysticism of the New Surrealist. Yet America calls out for humor and satire: there is much that is ridiculous in our commercialized, mass media, mass technology society /.../” (ib. 87).

One of the most vigorous counter-currents, opposing post-modernism as a doctrine, has emerged recently in Great Britain, where the poets of the New Metaphysical Art movement, founded in 1997 at the University of Sussex, have claimed in their manifesto:

We are against the trivialization of the art.

Against the uncritical and endless use of parody and pastiche.

Against the ironic and clever habits of postmodernists.

We are against the reductive pathos, the crudely ideological and the merely historical.

We need an art that is utterly contemporary which yet conspires to invert the dominant zeitgeist.

Art must begin again the broken conversation with Eternity.

We need art which is defiant, passionate, metaphysical and utterly inexorable.

We are a surfeit of manipulated sensations without inner connection or philosophical coherence. The result is an unprecedented collective numbing of the imagination and the annihilation of inwardness.

The new metaphysical art emerges to face this inhuman anaesthesia.

(*The Review* 2000: 3, see also Abbs 2000: 84–94)

The stress Friedrich Schlegel put on (essential) poetry’s interior variety and dynamics, as well as its profound openness, was shared by other great voices of romanticism. In his prologue to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), William Wordsworth did not

contend with the demand of simplicity, natural and everyday character and "the very language of men" for his poetic ideal. He made an important remark about something that perhaps only seldom was achieved in his own poetry: "The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life /---/, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect" (Wordsworth 1950: 677). When Wordsworth speaks about poetry and prose (which in his opinion differs from versified poetry only formally), he makes another important observation. He admits that (verse) poetry is more fitting for the expression of tragical feelings or spiritual tension, because while prose accustoms the reader to a certain regularity of rhythm patterns, verse poetry provides more possibilities for sudden changes and transitions of sentiment, thus throwing "a sort of half-consciousness or unsubstantial existence over the whole composition" (ib. 692). Wordsworth comes especially close to Gracián's conclusions, when he admits that the main pleasure of metrical language (poetry) is derived "from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude" (ib. 693). This is a direct hint at the interior variety and movement, as principal feeders of the aesthetic and perceptual experience emanating from all outstanding poetry.

The same idea of "similitude in dissimilitude" was echoed twenty years later by Percy Bysshe Shelley in his *A Defence of Poetry* (1821). Every great poet, as Shelley claims, brings in a renovation of the form, even though he at the same time follows the tradition (Shelley 1912: 7). Despite aspiring to eternal truth, poetry changes continuously its exterior costume, which depends on time; often "a majestic form and graceful motions will express themselves through the most barbarous and tasteless costume" (ib.11), which is preferred in great poetry to the exhibition of "the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour" (ib.). Again close to Gracián's poetic faculty of *agudeza*, Shelley further asserts that "Poetry /---/ differs in this respect from logic, that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence have no necessary connexion with the consciousness or will." (Ib. 36). Finally, Shelley says something

we the postmoderns tend to forget too often: "The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the eternal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it. (ib. 31). Though, luckily, our oblivion is not complete. Thus Indrek Tart (1999), echoing the ideas of A. Melucci about the function of poetry in the life of our postmodern info-technological and "globalized" man in *The Playing Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) comes to exactly the same conclusions as Shelley, two hundred years earlier.

## 2. Estonian Postmodern Poetry

To treat now the theme of Estonian postmodern poetry, I inevitably will have mention a series of names which do not say much to Western postmodern centres. The only exception might be Jaan Kaplinski (b. 1941), who has seen several of his books translated into English and whose work has also been to some extent discussed in the previous issues of *Interlitteraria* (e.g. Soovik 1999). I myself have attempted to analyze some key issues of his work and that of another leading poet in the last thirty years, Hando Runnel (b. 1938), in Talvet 1999. Despite apparently antipodal ideological differences between the two poets — the former a cosmopolitan and a universalist, the latter a nationally orientated conservative — deep existential roots can be seen in the work of both of them. The former's biocentric individualism and the latter's ethnocentric collectivism — as I have tried to define, respectively, their basic discourses — have in common a profound worry about either the global ecological state in the traditional sense (Kaplinski) or the human and ethnic ecology (Runnel). Put simply, both accept life, with all its organic species, and both reject human alienation of any kind. There are movingly personal and confessional elements in the work of both, but neither of them is limited to the exclusively personal or intimate area of feelings. Both rejected the conception of the "self" imposed by the Soviet



authorities in some of their most mature work (as Kaplinski's *Õhtu toob tagasi kōik*, 1985, and Runnel's *Punaste õhtute purpur*, 1982), seeking to transgress either into the wider world (Kaplinski), showing that the "other", the "foreigner" (nearly always an "enemy" for the Soviet authorities) could share the intimate "self" of the Estonian in his/ her opposition to the alienated Soviet "self". Especially symbolic in this sense are (from the above mentioned books) Kaplinski's poem "I Saw Yunichiro to Tallinn" and Runnel's "(\*\*\*) Here in Estonia Lived an Englishman". For its brevity, I will reproduce here only the latter:

HERE IN ESTONIA LIVED AN ENGLISHMAN,  
 I knew indirectly.  
 He was born in England,  
 and had finished his schools c u m l a u d e .  
 Then he taught Estonians in Estonia,  
 gained admirers for his virile mind,  
 and rode a bike, as in a dark time,  
 with a flashlight in his hand.

(Trans. by J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

All the rich intimate associations this poem provides can hardly be followed in translation, though, it must also be admitted that a young Estonian reading it today in the original Estonian would not be in a much better situation than a foreign reader. To a more experienced Estonian reader, who has shared with Runnel the long vegetation in the half-darkness of the Soviet period, the first line "Here in Estonian lived an Englishman" recalls at once the isolated and alienated atmosphere where we lived only a dozen years ago. "An Englishman" means literally "one Englishman" (in the Estonian, a language which does not use articles, "one" (*üks*) preceding the noun puts a special stress on it). The English professor Arthur Robert Hone (1915–1972), who in the post-war Tartu taught English literature and some Spanish at Tartu University, was indeed until the beginning of the 1970s the only Englishman living in Estonia and the only foreigner residing in Tartu (an officially semi-closed town until the beginning of the 1980s). A neutral description of that Englishman's background follows, intentionally and forcefully elliptical, as in the times of writing the poem

disclosing the authentic facts about how a British citizen could settle in Soviet Estonia, was forbidden. "Gained admirers for his virile mind" is another hint at the defectiveness of the official "self": something that in a democratic society would be normal — living and exercising one's profession —, is here described as an especially "virile" deed. The final lines show best the interior shift of the poem from a neutral and almost dry factual description to a symbolic existential image of a brave teacher who by casting light in the darkness of the Soviet regime aspires to transgress the alienated "self" and discover the authentically human "self", to be shared likewise by the Estonians, the English, the Russians, or whatever nationalities.

In some cases, notably that of Paul-Eerik Rummo (b. 1942), too openly precipitant attempts to transgress the "borders" established by the alienated "self" were immediately halted by the censorship. Rummo's cycle of poems *Saatja aadress* ('The Sender's Address'), written between 1968 and 1972, after his extremely successful and hailed debut, had to circulate for years in the manuscript form. Only a part of the poems could appear in 1985, while the whole cycle, including verses like "in a country where Marx supported by armoured cars has not resolved a single real problem / in a country where self-engendered existentialism for tens of years has helped many to preserve their existence and subsist" for the first time were published in 1989.

A similarly desperate desire to transgress the "borders" of alienation and step into a freer and more humane sphere of existence, inspired the work of Juhan Viiding (1948–1995), a professional actor and poet who in the fourth year of Estonia's restored independence decided to leave this world committing suicide. However, much more than in the case of Rummo, the alienated "self" in Viiding's poetry resides inside an ordinary Estonian himself; he thus, to some extent, could foresee the anguish that is still haunts the everyday life of a good many of Estonians after the country's rejoining the "free" market-type Western society. Viiding who until 1975 wrote under the pseudonym of Jüri Üdi (George Marrow), gained by a special playfulness (rapid changes from irony to self-irony, from the grotesque to cordiality, witty puns, colloquial speech, abundant quotations and pastiches)

immense popularity among the Estonian reading public, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. A younger critic and poet Hasso Krull, a disciple himself of Western postmodern and deconstructionist discourses, has seen in Viiding a great forerunner of Estonian postmodern poetry and a most radical revolutionizer of the poetic language (e.g. Krull 1998).

Indeed, Viiding / Üdi brought into Estonian poetry a new "lightness" of style. This made him differ, for instance, from Hando Runnel, whose ironic poetry still mostly has carried (overt or hidden) satirical accents. Krull has seen Viiding's "new quality" in a kind of a lingual "hyper-ellipticity" (ib. 593). In a sense, yes. The kind of a narration where one "story" is suddenly interrupted and interwoven by another "story" (which has no continuation) is one of the favourite poetic devices of Viiding, especially in his period of being Jüri Üdi. (By the way, in the first two lines of the above quoted poem by Runnel the same poetic recourse can vividly be observed). However, I could add that the charm of Viiding's poetry may not even reside so much in his stylistic ellipticity than in an intentionally over-stressed narrative completeness — a kind of a super- or -hyper-narrativity. A good many of his poems are narrated in short, often repeated phrases. In their abundance they form a style that coincides with that of the official Soviet ideology: an infantile goodness emanating from the all-knowing Party, the daily repetition of the clear truths of the Marxist-Leninist alphabet, in whatever cue or scale. Imitating this official semi-infantile style Viiding at the same time skilfully introduced a dissonant tragic tonality. Thus he retreats from the official "self" (which is "official" in the sense that it is hypocritical, though its masque of childishness was never completely devoid of a genuine childish sincerity) to the deeper "self", well aware of the limits and the tragedy of an individual human life. At the same time that deeper "self" itself is not anything complete, firm in its opposition to the official "self", but thoroughly vulnerable, open to the seductions of the official ideology, as well as the earthy pleasures, a reward for conformity in those times.

In my opinion, more by far than in the work of Viiding, one could see a pre-postmodern revolt against the official "self" and its truths in the poetry of Andres Ehin (b. 1940). Unlike Kaplinski,



Runnel or Viiding, Ehin does not attempt to oppose the (semi-) absurd language of the official “self” by a language of deeper human content (however hidden or hypersymbolic), but chooses to face the absurd by another absurd — relying on surrealist imagery, consciously devoid of any fixed or firm (fundamental) significance. The deficiency of reality can thus be seen in its lack of meanings, in the absurd and grotesque series of loosely connected images, which often rely on puns and sound effects. Ehin has remained faithful to his poetic credo until today, but I think it is significant what he says in one of his poems in 1988:

I can't join any teachings  
but the teachings (not to mention the teachers)  
join passionately with me

over and over again I find  
that some of them  
have sucked themselves  
onto my ankle with their jaws

in the muddy bottom of time's river  
overwhelming pluralism fixes itself  
to my instep

I realise that kind of thing's inevitable  
but every now and then  
I lift my foot and brush them off

because in spite of everything I want to belong  
to my own self

(Trans. by the author and R. Caddel)

Thus Ehin has prefigured in his poem one of my central thesis: pluralism, lack of meanings, an absolute relativism and fragmentation themselves, when fetishized, become another “great narrative” which in essence does not differ from those against which it was initially directed. Though a great admirer of the poetry of Artur Alliksaar (1923–1966) — Estonia's (and maybe one of Europe's) greatest “language poet” — Ehin has not — and I think to his advantage — directly followed Alliksaar's poetic discourse

based on a brilliant interplay of meanings with assonances and alliterations. Amidst accumulated series of absurd images suddenly meanings appear, gaining in their effect just by the suddenness of movement in a poem's "sleeping body".

Lastly, I would mention the work of two woman poets, Ene Mihkelson (b. 1944) and Mari Vallisoo (b. 1950) who in my opinion have powerfully contributed to the Estonian transmodern poetic discourse at the turn of the millennium. Their work is deeply personal, with the intimate plane strongly prevailing over "mankind's great themes". However, they both manage to elevate — by different means — the personal and the particular to a universal dimension. Their "transmodernness" can be seen in the fact that they both abandon the traditional romantic-symbolist line of poetry, profoundly rooted in the Estonian tradition, in which the employment of the regular rhyme metres (especially quatrains) has been quite common even in the most recent time. Mihkelson has written almost exclusively in unrhymed free verse, often making intentionally the verse rhythm differ from the phrase rhythm (i.e. starting new phrases in the middle of a line) and abandoning interpunctuation. Though these features are by no means new in international poetics, their constant use by Mihkelson has meant undermining a longer tradition in Estonian poetry. Vallisoo, on her part, has not abandoned rhyme, but has used it in a much freer manner, in verses for the most part not submitted to a fixed regular metrical rhythm. Besides, she has skilfully introduced accents from popular speech, while a part of her work is, in fact, written in the dialect spoken in the eastern part of Estonia, near the Lake Peipus, or the border with Russia. In the case of both Mihkelson and Vallisoo these new and more flexible formal patterns have served to convey in a highly individualized manner a poetic discourse rich in philosophical shades.

The main distinguishing feature in Mihkelson's poetry, from her first collections at the end of the 1970s, is its strongly stressed introspection. The "self" to be analyzed is not really an object, but is hidden in the poet herself so deeply that she has constant difficulties in ex-pressing it, or dragging it to the light of clarity. This has certainly meant a radical pessimism, contradicting both the official Soviet "self", the euphorically nationalist "self" of the

newly independent Estonia, as well as the light joking and self-confident irony so widespread in the postmodern "mainstream" art. In a poem of the collection *Tuhased tiivad* ('Ashy Wings', 1982) Mihkelson says:

Yes of Estonia I would still  
testify but how could I speak  
of her if I am of the same  
matter the same tongue in my mouth  
the only one this tiny people  
has had for centuries Probably  
I have not existed and there was no land  
distinct from the people  
So I won't be reciting  
the popular anthem I am  
only a particle in this blood union

(Trans. by J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

The "borders" of the "self" in Mihkelson thus remain intransigent, though the poet never abandons her efforts to transgress them, towards an ethic integrity, which can be conjectured (though obscurely) in the closeness to Nature.

Whereas Mihkelson's main discourse is heavily burdened with a radical and fundamentalist search of the "self", Vallisoo, though essentially a poet of tragic inspiration, has been able to introduce in her poetic vision lighter shades of (popular) humour and wisdom, which facilitate distance, a capability to embrace a tragedy — taking place in an intentionally trivialized micro-space, full of humble everyday objects — into a macrocosmic all-human (mythological) discourse. The charm of Vallisoo's poetry emerges for the most part from swift transitions from the trivial (concrete, everyday, local, earthy) to the mythical, and vice versa, as a playful de-mythologizing is one of the main poetic means by which she, often bitterly ironical, discloses the hidden shades of man's (man-kind's) "self". If Mihkelson still has a broader socio-political order as a vaguely guessed background of her own intransigent "self", Vallisoo tends to overlook those backgrounds



completely, moving directly and exclusively between the intimate and the universal (mythical).

In her latest work, playfully allusive and ironic images have gained more weight, without deafening, however, shifts to tragic and embittered undertones. The interior movement becomes especially tense and meaningful, as Vallisoo generally develops them in a reduced poetic space, making different speeches and voices intermingle. Thus, a poem from her latest collection *Ainsuse olevik* ('The Present of the Singular', 2000):

### Heroes Between Themselves

Where have you come from? Where are you going?  
Oh, just hurrying  
to a heroic deed.  
Passing by — a man was there on a rock,  
bound, a bird  
annoyed him.  
I unbound him from the rock.  
And yourself? What's on your mind?

With a kid over the sea  
I have to settle accounts.  
On my way I visited some corners  
of the world — ports, an island,  
where a girl was ruined.  
No more time to speak.

(Trans. by J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

The mythological "short story" of the poem is at the same time universal and local. The first stanza alludes to the universal myth of Prometheus, though the poet never mentions directly his liberator, the hero Heracles. His heroic deed, realized "passing by", has been traditionally interpreted as returning light to human-kind, the beginning of the process that we call civilization, in defiance of the tyrant God (religion). The second stanza, on the contrary, presents by further allusions the local Estonian hero Kalevipoeg (the protagonist of the Estonian epic taking its title

after his name, *Kalevipoeg*, or *The Son of Kalev*, by Fr. R. Kreutzwald, published in 1861). The latter's "heroic deeds" look rather grotesque, compared with those of Heracles: he brawls with a neighbouring Finnish lad and sends to destruction a maid from an island.

The opposition of two heroes, however, is far from being unambiguous, to the disadvantage of *Kalevipoeg*. Both make their "great deeds" "passing by", reflecting thus, in the same way, the superficial development of the Western civilization, which relying on the imposition of power (force) and reason, has left little if any room for sensibility, for understanding peoples and nations as unique individuals. Besides, one can interpret the poem as a (feminist) protest against masculine tyranny — the hint at the male egoism and individualism which has led the Western civilization to its historic "victories", is clear enough.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the necessity to step a little aside from the postmodern "mainstream" poetry and try to appreciate different voices emerging from world's "obscure" border areas and peripheries. By doing so, we can reach, perhaps the understanding that genuine poetry of whatever time, and also genuine postmodern poetry, has been and will always be searching for its authentic "self", which can hardly be defined or decreed by aesthetic or political "centres".

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## Naming and Claiming: Mental Maps of Estonia in the Poetry of Viivi Luik and Jaan Kaplinski<sup>1</sup>

ENE-REET SOOVIK

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It is difficult to imagine the core of the canon of contemporary Estonian poetry without representatives of the so-called Cassette generation, those poets whose slim first volumes appeared in the 1960s, published together as “cassette sets”. This paper sets out to observe the mental maps outlined by the experience of place in the poetry of two of them: Viivi Luik (born in the Viljandi region in 1946) and Jaan Kaplinski (born in Tartu in 1941). Their first collections of poetry, titled *Pilvede püha* (*The Holiday of Clouds*) and *Jäljed allikal* (*Tracks at the Spring*), respectively, were published in the same “cassette” in 1965. Luik’s last collection that comprises a selection of earlier poetry as well as a handful of new verse, *Maa taevas* (*The Heaven of Earth*) appeared in 1993, Kaplinski’s *Öölinnud, öömõtted* (*Night Birds, Night Thoughts*) came out in 1998. Thus their oeuvre spans several decades and witnesses major social and political shifts, visibly manifested in the re-structuring of the political map of Europe, with their native land, hitherto camouflaged as a Soviet republic, acquiring a distinct shape on it. In 1992, immediately after the most turbulent and decisive year of the period in the Baltics, the British

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geographer Stephen Daniels happened to note that in the old, imperial world everything could be fixed on maps, while now the contours of place seem to be in flux (Daniels 1992: 311). It may also be of interest to observe if this fluidity, visibly reflected in cartographic changes that appear to be suddenly revealed to the imperial gaze, is also reflected in the poetic experience of place and geography mediated by Kaplinski's and Luik's texts.

Place is a concept of central significance for contemporary humanistic geography. The geographer Edward Relph, a scholar following the phenomenological tradition, characterises places as phenomena of the geography of the lived-world of direct experience, centres of personal significance and focuses of human intention (Relph 1976: 5, 10, 22). "The essence of place lies in the largely unconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence," Relph claims (ib. 43). Pauli Tapani Karjalainen who shares the phenomenological understanding of the notion of place has studied representation of places in creative literature. In his analysis of Bo Carpelan's *Urwind*, Karjalainen suggests three possible modes of reading that allow interpretation of places in literature from different aspects (Karjalainen 1998: 9–10). The mimetic reading assumes documentary value in literary texts concerned with places and seeks correspondences between the work of literature and actual sites and locations in the life-world. The hermeneutic mode of reading involves interpreting subjective experience of the senses conveyed in literature, noticing the ways in which the place is interpreted and valued. The focus is on "a transition from the objective landscape to a subjective one, from the outer to the inner reality, or phenomenologically, to a dialogue between the inner and outer worlds". (Ib. 9) The textual mode is concerned with the permanent process of producing and deferring meaning in the interaction of the text and the reader. It is the maps of the mind that result from the hermeneutic approach to texts that are of primary interest in our reading of Luik and Kaplinski.

Both Relph and Karjalainen ultimately draw on the Heideggerian idea of dwelling, inhabiting a place, and relate this with the notion of home (Relph 1976, Karjalainen 1998). Relph suggests that, although Heidegger dismisses the actual notion of home as a

distorted phenomenon nowadays, home still can be deemed "the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling-place of being." (Relph 1976: 42) Karjalainen attributes such properties as sentiments, emotions, interpersonal relationships etc., that can be detected in the description of a house, to the homeness of the building for the people living in it and contends that such properties are accessible for portrayal for the insiders only, the home being something personal and private. According to the phenomenological viewpoint, at-homeness is an essential aspect of human existence.

Relph finds that any place is experienced as an "inside" that can be distinguished from an "outside". Insideness, i.e. the degree to which a person belongs to and associates himself with place, is the essential core of the experience of place, yet it is not an absolute, unchanging entity, but can be measured on a continuous scale. The extreme ends of the scale are marked by the states of existential insideness and existential outsideness. Relph defines the former as follows, "Existential insideness characterises belonging to a place and the deep and complete identity with a place that is the very foundation of the place concept." (1976: 55) The place is full of significances, although not deliberately reflected upon; an existential insider feels sameness with the place. Existential outsideness, on the contrary, involves a feeling of not belonging, a sense of the unreality of the world and a profound alienation from places that appear to be just incidental (ib. 51).

This type of feeling for place can be viewed in combination with Edward Said's concepts of filiation and affiliation. Said, when considering the notion of place, lays a special emphasis on the phrases *at home in a place*, *belonging to* or *in a place*, and suggests that the range of meanings conveyed by these can be found in culture that he interprets as "an environment, process and hegemony in which individuals (in their private circumstances) and their works are embedded." (Said 1984: 8) A person can have congenital filiation with his or her natal culture, or acquire affiliation with novel cultural characteristics via alien institutions, associations and communities. (ib. 16-17) In the contemporary world unadulterated filiative outlook is understandably becoming more rare.



Viivi Luik's first collection is set among the Estonian countryside, the fields and woods of the Estonian (traditionally peasant) culture, and from there it has gradually moved on to depicting urban atmosphere. One of the recurrent notions in Luik's poetry is landscape, first appearing as "the autumn landscapes" in her debut collection. Later, even her titles refer to, e.g., "Night Landscapes" and "Eternal Landscapes". Landscape is one of the characteristic properties of place, its usual, physical form that lends itself to description (Relph 1976: 30). However, a glance at Luik's landscapes reveals that no mimetic description of particular localities has been attempted. There occurs no reproduction of the landmarks of the scenery, of its particular recognisable features that could be used for orientation. Instead, it is the impermanent elements in nature that become foregrounded: the seasonal changes, the turns of the weather, the state of vegetation, the particular month of the year. It is particularly noticeable that hardly any toponyms make their appearance, giving no cues as to the whereabouts of her poems' settings on a geographical map of territory. Thus, it would seem that the question could be posed whether the map of her poetry does have a counterpart in empirical reality, if we are indeed dealing with places — in case we understand places as designated locations, limited fractions of space — or if the landscapes merge into an undivided roll of the poet's private mindscape, serving as symbols for the inner self.

I would suggest, however, that this is not the case. "Places are not neutral and objective segments of physical space but sites of concrete human involvement" as Karjalainen (1993:67) claims, and Luik's involvement with her environment could hardly be deeper. What we meet in her poetry is a profound experience of existential insideness. The undoubtedly Estonian landscape we meet in her poems, is, for her, "a means of placing oneself somewhere, an image of one's environment, even a mark of identification" (ib. 68), a feature of the map of the mind that relates the poet with her living surroundings (Karjalainen 1998: 10).

For the resident, an insider, the landscape is known by lived familiarity (Karjalainen 1993: 68). For Luik, the places of her poetry are not unique cartographic locations to be recognised or depicted from a distance, but rather, the poet seems so immersed in

the surrounding space as to make almost no distinction between herself and the landscape. Even the poet's body, not to mention the mind, seems to become impregnated with the surroundings, "A piece of memory in your hand. You press, / until white water remains in your fist, / dust near the city limits and marketplaces, / some fields and swallows added// and clouds and greengrocers' shops, / pattering rain, a bunch of lilies of the valley./ All this says: the tissues of your body / were made from the earth of this very land." It is the private memory from which sensory experiences can be squeezed at will that seals the oneness of the poet with the land, as if in explicit illustration of Karjalainen's argument, "... the senses... are essentially tied up with a deep personal meeting with the world, in the process of which the human memory, a key existential factor, plays a vital role." (Karjalainen 1998: 7).

In this land Luik knows her way around with such a certainty as to be in no need of names or naming the places. The meanings of the landscape are there for her without deliberate pondering on the issues. The physical and mental wandering that occurs in the environment of Luik's poetry comes to her as naturally as breathing, requiring no division of the surroundings into logically observable units that could be systematically arranged for her to structure or explain her route self-consciously.

The insider's role was apparent already in her first collection that presented several place (landscape) experiences, yet contained but two place-names. In relation to both of these Luik, exceptionally in her poetry, takes on the role of a visitor who commands a tourist's gaze. Väike väin, the strait between the islands of Muhu and Saaremaa, is a new landmark for a tired wanderer resting herself on a bench at a bus stop in the poem "Rannalaulud" ("Seashore Songs"). The second toponym occurs as the title of the poem "Kurgjal" — at Kurgja, the farm of Carl Robert Jakobson, a major figure of the Estonian national awakening. A traveller is approaching the farm on a track through the woods. First, the farm is a distant destination; in the end, it emerges as a gateway to the nation's common past that provides the location with significance even for the newcomer. However, belonging to the cultural group who can apprehend the historical meaning of the place does not

fully compensate for the lack of an earlier intimate experience, and thus the possibility of existential insideness is excluded.

It is remarkable that in poems explicitly concerned with the poet's relationship with her native land, Luik often tends to avoid mentioning the country's name, at times resorting to descriptive phrases like "the northern land" or to the use of generic terms such as the common "homeland". Lengthy descriptions centred around non-committal nouns such as "city", "town", substitute for particular locations on the map, although an Estonian is certain to recognise the equivalents in the life-world geography, e.g. "in a little town / on the shore of the Baltic / worries are the same / as all over the wide world." Luik's city with its cafés and streetcars, i.e. Tallinn, has no named quarters or streets, no particular landmarks beside the Town Hall and Town Hall Square that can be found in many towns.

An extreme wariness as regards naming is apparent in the poem "Sünnikoht" ("Place of birth"), "Again the sky is glowing blue on the rye field / fluttering over the life, over the destiny. / An official names my place of birth / in the white town hall of a small Estonian town." We learn that the poet's place of birth does indeed have a name in the official use, but that she herself is reluctant to utter it. Even if we know where in Estonia the poet is born and believe the poem to be mimetic in this respect, we have no way of telling if the small town in Estonia that serves as the setting for the scene actually is the place of birth, as, again, no proper names are involved. However, the poem at least mentions the name of the country that in other cases may remain hidden, e.g., as when the poem instead points at something behind the border, against which the here-ness can be apprehended, "A low-pressure area moved from Latvia to Finland / and brought along a sudden change of weather." On its way the low depression area obviously passed over Estonia where the weather changed, but the name of the country can only be deduced from the explicit names of the neighbours.

On the one hand, this may resemble avoidance of taking the sacred name in vain; on the other hand, there is a magic element present in naming, letting the others know the name implies giving the hearer/reader power over what is mentioned or spelled out.



Thus, Luik's seems to be poetry of a most intimate and concealing kind, bringing into mind the words "Varja vabadust." ("Safeguard the freedom.") uttered by the free peasant Vahur to his son in the historical novel by E. Bornhöhe's *Tasuja* (*The Avenger*, 1880), written in the vein of national romanticism.

The 1982 collection *Rängast rõõmust* (*From Hard Joy*) becomes more explicit in dwelling on the country of Estonia, its language and the nation. In this book of poetry the words "homeland" and "fatherland" occur, but Estonia also acquires a proper name. The name, however, is not attached to an abstract notion that transcends the immediate senses, but is flanked by the intimate images of family and home, mediated by personal memory, "I stopped to look at the sky / Cannot talk of anything else. / I remember my own mother / and the potato plot of Estonia". The title poem refashions the country into a map with the North described as the upper and the South as the lower margin, "Tallinn above, but Valga at the bottom margin, / cold summers, limestone / and earth of clay in the middle". Earlier, Luik has used the description of a region with the help of a list, compiled as an account of an idle passer-by, when writing about Poland as a tourist travelling through the country: "Single landscapes. Coal, potatoes, salt. Nothing special. / Towns." The effect of that poem arose from the casual mention among the towns of Auschwitz — known as an emblem of horror, yet not as a site of experience. In the later poem, however, even if the native place is at first presented as an impersonal public map, hung up vertically on the wall, the effect is not that of a detached observation. What is emphasised is rather the lived experience of what it feels like to live between these margins, the list contains not products, but conditions. The poem ends with the persona contemplating her hands, looking at "the haughty glow of blood between the ten fingernails, / at the blood that has no value, / without the language and the land". Once again, the filiative features strongly predominant in Luik's poetry become highlighted by blood ties, especially if we consider the weight Said has attached to images of actual biological kinship.

In recent times Luik has been residing mostly outside Estonia. In an interview given to an Estonian newspaper she confirms the

unselfconscious oneness of the dweller and the dwelling-place, evident throughout her poetry, yet modifies it by the possibility of being transplanted into a foreign soil, of acquiring affiliative features as a dweller among another culture. "If you live somewhere, you do it. Then you do not fear or enjoy, but you yourself are a part of your surroundings. When I live in Rome, I am part of Rome, when in Tallinn, part of Tallinn, that is all there is to it." (Luik 2000: 13). At the same time, Luik has more or less abandoned publishing poems, her latest works to appear in print have been essays and short fiction. Thus, the concurrent disappearance of the Estonian surroundings, and the poetry hitherto so inseparable from the former is noticeable in Luik's case. At the same time, an expulsion of Estonia from the private mental geography of the people onto the actual map requiring measures, names and public access has taken place. A poet for whom, like for the classic Juhan Liiv from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (at that time Estonia still was a part of the Tsarist Russia), the country has been a "secret lover" not to be spoken of in front of the others, may have re-channelled her creative impulses even for that reason.

It is by now a critical commonplace to view Jaan Kaplinski as the most conspicuous representative in Estonian poetry of features that can be regarded as affiliative, such as an interest in Eastern religions and philosophies, a cosmopolitan awareness of the earth as an interconnected ecological whole, and not infrequent recollection of dramatic episodes and incidents from world history, rather than focussing on their parallels in Estonian history. Critics, e.g., Jüri Talvet also emphasise that several of the works by "Kaplinski the universalist and the internationalist" first appeared abroad. (Talvet 1999: 204–5) This cosmopolitan scope, however, does not exclude the sense of belonging — Tiiu Speek comments on the "rootedness in a place, and direct, deeply personal, spiritual relationship with local nature and ecological mentality of caring and respect", as the main characteristics of Kaplinski's nature poetry. (Speek 2000: 166). Kaplinski's poetry is not that of total detachment either, which poses the question as to what degree at-homeness in Estonia and in the particular places there emerges in Kaplinski's oeuvre.

Already Kaplinski's first collection displayed a tendency towards the affiliative, seeking inspiration not so much in the unselfconsciously familiar environment, but rather being attracted to the exoticism of Matahiva and Rapanui in the Southern seas, referring to ancient Egypt and the Americas, and making trips to Karelia and Siberia. The mapping of poetic journeys into faraway places certainly requires offering the reader points of orientation if the regions and locations are to be recognised. The obvious device here is providing their names. Yet names themselves are not obvious, cannot be taken for granted as natural phenomena. A place does not exist unless human intentions claim it as a separate unit of "insideness". "Space is claimed for man by naming it," Relph writes (1976: 16). "The naming of regions and places is indeed part of a fundamental structuring of existential space.", and later, "Indeed one of man's first acts of entering any unexplored or uninhabited region is to give names to at least the most prominent features and thus to humanise the wilderness." (ib. 17)

Kaplinski explicitly poses the question of who gave the names to the places met. "Who were the first ones to give names to the places? / It was a major task, now it is done. / Bai-kul, Angara, Irkut, Selenga, Munku-Sardök." The people who did it claimed these places as their own; the namegiver becomes the owner, emerges as the insider. And the names in the deep Siberia, a region quite often associated with the repressive side of the Russian/Soviet Empire actually turn out not to be Russian! Thus, Kaplinski writes of the Buryat origin of the name of Lake Baikal, "The Buryats say to it: dalai, Baigal-dalai, this is — the sea."

Also, a name is proof of the reality of the place, "Just come and look at the mountain river. / For example this one. / It even has a name, Zun-Morin". Disappearance of the name wipes the place off the map and dissolves the boundaries of the segment of space selected as an "inside" by the name-givers in the life-world. Later dwellers in their turn may restructure the space according to their own intentions. The interdependence of the districts of ancient Estonians and their names plays a prominent role in the poem "*Maarjamaa ballaad*" ("*Ballad of Mary's Own land*"), "Look over the sea and the forests, watch places and names disappear. / Look at Vaiga as long as you can while Alutaguse is till here." (Tr. S.



Hamill) Another poem recalls that the same happened to the places and languages of Native American tribes. "Long ago our state fell into pieces. / Narragansett. Susquehanna. Chemehuevi. Mattole. / Too long names. Too strange languages." Kaplinski's world of humans, as it appears in the poems, is more a conscious creation structured by language than a nameless situation taken for granted, the dissolving of the poet in the pre-given environment we meet in the case of Luik.

Sequences of different toponyms in Kaplinski's meditations create the impression of a transcendental experience of the world as a whole, of the sameness of its different parts in their synecdochal role of *pars pro toto*. Side by side with the poems of a simultaneous presence of everything in a moment are those in which the persona finds himself travelling, passing through different places and recording their coordinates on the map in a linear way, suggesting gradual movement through space. In the English-language poem *Beauty is intolerably short-lived* the poet and his wife are returning from Pärnu where they have visited the theatre: "There was snow/ on spruces and pines on both sides/ on the long road. Snow in Tihemetsa. / Snow in Kilingi-Nõmme. / Snow in Abja and Nuia. / Snow in Helme, snow in Tõrva. / Snow in Rõngu. Snow in Elva." The placenames indeed follow a bus journey from the coastal town of Pärnu to Tartu, Kaplinski's hometown, although recognising this would require a knowledge of Estonian geography an English-language audience cannot be expected to have. Significantly enough, the play seen in Pärnu is said to be "Translations" by Brian Friel, concerned with translating place-names from Irish into the imperial English. Kaplinski's toponyms, however, remain stubbornly untranslated foreign words within the English of the poem. Even the very title of Kaplinski's book of poetry written in English, *I am the Spring in Tartu* produces the same effect, defining the poet's identity through an Estonian place-name.

A number of Kaplinski's poems are set in Tartu, offering an abundance of names of the districts, the streets, geographical and even geological characteristics, such as the red sandstone from the Devon period that forms the banks of the Emajõgi river. These are registered as parts of a habitual environment; it is the thorough-

fares, familiar routes and crossroads that are mentioned, the knowledge of them is both intimately personal as well as shared with other people inhabiting the places who may recall their own experiences of them. This is an attitude to be expected from a local, "As they know their places, the town dwellers normally do not have to "objectify" it. For them the town has a self-explanatory character and in this sense the town-dwellers are very much inside their place. For a visitor, the architecture and the things the town-dwellers simply take for granted may become the main subject." (Karjalainen 1993: 58) Yet detailed mapping implies a conscious observation of the surroundings, even if these are surroundings of an intimate kind. And even in the poems, in which there are no maps drawn, a conscious observer of the place is ever-present.

Accordingly, despite the Tartu poems — and despite those set in the poet's country place — Kaplinski cannot be viewed as an existential insider in either of the places, as the degree of at-homeness lacks a certain innocent intimacy, out of reach because of the knowingness of the poems as regards both the immediate environment as well as what may lie behind its limits. On the other hand, uncomfortable alienation or freedom from any ties and, accordingly, any responsibility, characteristic of existential out-sideness are missing as well, reminiscent of David Seamon's statement in connection with Doris Lessing, "... the major need is the ability to be both insider and outsider: to feel at home in a particular place, yet to understand that place as it is part of a larger earth whole." (Seamon 1981: 98). Thus, in Relph's terms Kaplinski can be labelled as an empathetic insider, a person who participates in the scene, grasps its meanings and is capable of identification, yet does this with a deliberate effort. (Relph 1976: 54–55) "For such people, places are records and expressions of the cultural values and experiences of those who create and live in them." (Ib.)

In the independent Estonia Kaplinski has continued to write poetry, and also poetry stemming from particular locations. The foreign places that appeared as parts of generalising meditations on world totality in his earlier poems have increasingly more often become the settings in which the persona moves, be it in France or in Finland. The spread of his use of languages has grown as well — the latest collection contains poems in English and Finnish

besides Estonian ones, and the poet admits to writing increasingly more poems in languages other than Estonian (Kaplinski 2000: 106–112, 122), thus acquiring explicitly affiliative characteristics that can be apprehended at first glance. A larger variety of immediate settings goes hand in hand with a more varied selection of languages to express the experiences of the places.

To conclude the discussion of place experiences in Luik and Kapinski, their use of the image of the map of Estonia can be employed to illustrate the relationship of the poets' minds with the actual topographic map. This is not insignificant, as knowledge of maps and plans is a fundamental part of our experiences of space and a prominent image for any region is its map shape (Relph 1976: 26). Luik writes

THE TREETOPS MOVE, THE BIRCH BARK SPARKLES

They are shouting at the other side

But it echoes here.

It is here I am standing, this is my place.

It is my world that is struggling.

It is my century that is going on.

I bite the air and the salty welkin

So that it becomes dark in front of the eyes,

So that my reason disappears.

Into my skull the map of Estonia has been engraved.

The Estonian rudeness, perseverance and anger

Is my share now.<sup>2</sup>

Luik acknowledges her location and situation as her place, an inside enclosed in a forest and contrasted with an outside, yet not hermetically shut out from the latter, as the echoes from the outside will inescapably reach her. For her, the map of Estonia has been engraved into the skull, becoming a part of her body, an inescapable burden imposed on her, while she herself is blindly consuming the environment, imbuing herself with it without clear or purposeful reasoning. She admits to the tough, angry, harsh

<sup>2</sup> Translation is mine — E.-R. S.



features of the national stereotype as her own, both the poet's outer and inner being is one with her place.

Also in Kaplinski's poem we meet the map and the woods, yet these appear in fairly different roles:

The sun is already melting the gummy snow from my black boots  
and alder catkins and birch catkins and the woods across the road  
open quietly their tiny dumb mouths  
and the map of Estonia in the cupboard for papers is reproachfully  
silent

although I can hardly ever leave the thought that  
I have still not really been to Uderma Hellenurme  
where the Elva River is still rapid and shallow and clean  
before it is too late

I have still not been to the old couple of Salu in Jäneda  
to tape what they have to recall and retell  
before it is too late

I have not been to Kihnu and Ruhnu

I have collected so few songs from Saaremaa and  
none from Hiiumaa  
before it is too late

I have not been to Kadri Kukk who sings  
"Emäkene ennekeine süüdü anna ma sinule"  
and I never could go back to Minna Kokk  
who sang "Olõs minä tiidänu Tooni tarõ"  
before it was too late<sup>3</sup>

The wood does not act as a boundary for the poet's place but rather as a silent interlocutor, not as something to shield off the other side, but situated "across the road" itself. Kaplinski's map addresses him from outside himself, from a cupboard where it has been stuffed away. It is an external agent of conscience that reminds him of planned and premeditated activities connected with textual mediation, of places he has not visited, of folk songs stemming from these places that he has not recorded yet, and songs that cannot be recorded any more as it is too late. The warning lies in the silence, lack of words that can be fought with an incantation

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<sup>3</sup> Translation is mine — E.-R. S.

of place-names and folk songs. The disappearance of words, both those in songs and, indirectly, those of place-names is imminent, and the poem is focused on the importance of keeping alive the verbal in order not to lose the referents.

In summary, it can be concluded that Luik's poetry owns and safeguards, Kaplinski's claims and asserts, the place that is, or is named as, their own.

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## On the (Ir)regularity of Meter

H. L. HIX

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One dynamic in recent American poetry has been the nearly simultaneous efflorescence of two opposed schools, New Formalism and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. The differences between the two perspectives extend to nearly every possible issue: the connection or separation between poetry and politics, the relation of poetry to academic institutions, who were the most important poets of the past, and so on. Certainly one important point of disagreement between the two camps is formal, and has to do with the role of meter. Here I will attempt a form of reconciliation between the two schools on one formal issue, meter, by contrasting what Timothy Steele (considered a leading proponent of New Formalism) says on the matter with what Charles Bernstein (a leading proponent of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry) says, not attempting to *ally* the two views, but to *alloy* one with the other in order to construct an alternative.

Timothy Steele's *Missing Measures* makes a brilliant case on behalf of traditional metrical values in English-language poetry, and his acuity in observing and articulating the problems of modernism puts *Missing Measures* in the very small satchelful of most important works of criticism by living American poets. Yet even though I find persuasive his argument that meter matters, on two specific points I disagree with Steele about what meter *is*: his essentialism and his estimation of the place and role of metrical regularity.

Essentialism, "the doctrine that it is correct to distinguish between those properties of a thing, or kind of thing, that are essential to it, and those that are merely accidental", appears in



Steele's contention that meter is an unalterable function of a given language ("If one wants to invent a new prosody, one must invent a new language", Steele 1990: 288), and his hasty move from there to identifying meter as the essence of poetry. Contemporary poetry, he says, "often is judged exclusively with respect to its intentions or subject matter", leading to classifications of poets according to their respective causes; but on Steele's view, to classify poets as "formalists" for having introduced meter into their work, as if doing so were analogous to adopting a cause, "confuses what is extrinsic to poetic structure with what is intrinsic to it" (ib. 289–290). Against Steele's essentialism, according to which meter is essential to poetry and other features are accidental, not only do I doubt the specific point that meter is essential, loving as I do too many free verse poems and prose poems for that matter, but I also doubt, after the manner of Howard Nemerov's poem "Because You Asked About the Line Between Prose and Poetry", that if there *were* an essence, even one whose consequences were perceptible, that essence could be articulated.

I doubt, finally, that poetry has *any* essence, to make the case for which I would mimic the analysis of the concept 'game' early in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein challenges his reader to consider "the proceedings that we call 'games'", including board games, card games, ball games, and so on. "What is common to them all?" he asks. "Don't say: There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games' — but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all." Doing so reveals, according to Wittgenstein, not some feature common to all games, but "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing". He calls the similarities "family resemblances" because they overlap and criss-cross like "the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc." That we cannot identify a clear boundary for the concept 'game' does not diminish its usefulness.

Similarly with poetry. Even limiting oneself arbitrarily to a single linguistic/cultural tradition, no single criterion picks out *Beowulf*, the prologue to *Henry V*, "Jubilate Agno", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "The Armadillo", "Howl", and "The Colonel" as poetry, while excluding "Urn Burial", "The Jilting of Granny

Weatherall", and "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country", but that does not prevent readers from determining, with fair accuracy and near unanimity, whether a literary work is or is not poetry. The concept 'game' has "blurred edges", according to Wittgenstein, but so do the rules of tennis, which do not stipulate "how high one throws the ball..., or how hard", leading Wittgenstein to the rhetorical questions, "Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what is needed?" In the case of poetry, I think it is. We want to be able to see Amy Gerstler's *Bitter Angel* or Frank Bidart's "Genesis 1-2:4" or C. D. Wright's *Deepstep Come Shining* as poetry, even if we could not have anticipated them on the basis of the concept of poetry we held before encountering them. Clinging to meter as the essence of poetry would prevent our doing so.

Steele views "virtually all" verse until the twentieth century as organized "in the specifically and regularly ordered rhythmical units of meter". Steele tacitly assumes that poetry with meter is intrinsically superior to poetry without meter, a premise which is true if the stronger claim is true, that poetry without meter is not poetry at all. But without such essentialism, the five points he makes in his five chapters cannot establish his conclusion that "an art of measured speech nourishes" the qualities "most essential to human life" in "a way no other pursuit can", and indeed have no logical bearing at all on that conclusion. It is interesting and even important to observe that modernist poets began to adopt prose cadences, but the observation does not affirm the superiority of poetry over prose except by begging the question. I do not disagree with Steele's five points, but I do not think that they establish his conclusion. I agree, in other words, with his description of the historical facts, but not with the value judgment he takes these facts to support.

An alternative to Steele's view occurs in Charles Bernstein's *Poetics*. In place of Steele's attempt to identify poetry's essence, Bernstein asserts an ongoing process: "We don't know what 'art' is or does but we are forever finding out" (Bernstein 1992: 168). Indeed, Bernstein asserts a kind of paradoxical 'negative essence' for poetry, claiming to identify it precisely as "that which can't be

contained by any set of formal qualities" (ib. 151). On this particular point I find Bernstein's view both more plausible and more fruitful. In poetry, as in the other arts, new works continually exceed the parameters inferred from earlier works, modifying the parameters that future works will exceed. This does not denigrate traditional metrical forms and values in English-language poetry, but it does deny them the status of essence.

The other of Steele's assertions with which I disagree is his view that meter submits to regularity as its norm. His argument in *Missing Measures* depends on this view throughout. Steele claims that "Meter involves more than merely a vague property of rhythm. As the [OED's first] definition indicates, the rhythm has a specific form. It repeats. Its patterns can be discerned and anticipated. Its principles are recognizable" (Steele 1990: 21). He affirms the ancient Greek distinction between the "general patterns" of rhythm and the "regularly ordered" units of meter (ib. 31), a distinction that gives prose "rhythmical freedom" and poetry "metrical order" (ib. 71). He specifies that, although any instance of language use can be scanned, for it to be metrical it must use "feet in repeated and recognizable linear or strophic units" (ib. 63).

Steele *does* disclaim the sing-song "ti-tumming" of metronomic verse, acknowledging that "it would be rather difficult to write a 'metronomic' line, a line, that is, of light and heavy syllables of perfectly equivalent alternating weight" (ib. 61). But according to Steele the "necessary and happily infinite varieties of rhythmical contour" can exist only "within the norm of the conventional pentameter". Individual lines of poetry cannot themselves be perfectly regular, in other words, but the norm that they approximate is.

When Steele gives "An Explanation of Verse and Meter" in his next critical book, *All the Fun's In How You Say a Thing*, he spends a large portion of the book explaining the "infinite varieties", citing examples of lines in which "one of the metrically unaccented syllables receives more speech stress than one of the metrically accented syllables" (Steele 1999: 38) and identifying various forms of "metrical variation" and "rhythmical modulation". The numerous examples, though, do not persuade Steele away from the norm of regularity. He insists that "the chief



sources of variation in metrical composition reside *within* the norm itself. Indeed, modulation is possible only so long as the meter [clearly identified here with the norm of regularity] is respected" (ib. 39). I would argue that Steele's own examples show conclusively that regularity cannot stand as a norm. To choose only one example, Steele scans line 10 of Keats's "To Autumn", "Until they think warm days will never cease", as iambic pentameter. He notes that "warm", a metrically unaccented syllable, "receives a good deal of speech stress", nearly as much as "days". But he insists that "days" has just enough stress to keep the foot an iamb instead of a spondee. His point is to establish the hermeneutic principle that readers should "assume that the poet is modulating rather than altering the meter", instead of jumping "to the conclusion that the poet has suddenly plunged into an experiment with exotic feet or rhythms" (ib. 53). But why should we prefer that poets modulate meter rather than altering it? And if modulation happens as universally as Steele so conclusively demonstrates that it does, what meaning does the purported regularity of meter retain?

Again, Charles Bernstein serves as Steele's shadow opposite. Bernstein thinks that poetry ought not pursue regularity of meter, but should — and does — chart "the turbulent phenomenon known as human being" by "the *nonperiodic flow* of its 'chaotic prosody'" (Bernstein 1992: 167). The chaotic prosody "is not absolute but constrained. It is controllable not in its flowering but in the progression toward chaos and the regression from it" (ib. 168). In identifying Bernstein again as a corrective to Steele, I do *not* assert a general superiority for Bernstein's view, which has its own problems and limitations. For example, he lets theory drive poetry, as in this sentence, which he emphasizes by italics and by setting it off as its own paragraph: "*The test of a poetics is the poetry and poetic thinking that results*" (ib. 166). Even accepting that sentence as true, one might then argue that Steele's poetry comes closer than Bernstein's own to meeting the test of theory Bernstein's sentence proposes.

Steele attempts to explain how it can be true that (a) there appear to be distinct metrical patterns (in most cases a knowledgeable reader who describes a line as iambic pentameter can expect that other knowledgeable readers would describe the line with the

same term), when it is also true that (b) the pattern of speech stress in a given line of good poetry described as exemplifying a metrical pattern will not match the pattern of speech stress in another line of good poetry described as exemplifying the same metrical pattern. Steele seems to hold that the metrical patterns are real, that the perfect regularity of the metrical pattern establishes an acceptable range of variation for patterns of speech stress, and that the success of a pattern of speech stress depends on its falling within the acceptable range.

I think that there is a more plausible way to reconcile the apparently competing claims. A useful analogy comes from an unlikely source: *The Origin of Species*. Steele assumes that the metrical patterns are real. They exist independently from, and have ontological priority over, lines of poetry, which either fit or do not fit within a given pattern. Similarly, prior to Darwin many naturalists believed that the species are real, and exist independently from, and have ontological priority over, the varieties and the individuals that either fit or do not fit within them. What Darwin so elegantly showed is that we *construct* the concept of a species from observation of individuals, and that the manner of our construction could vary, so that whether we designate two clusters of individuals as distinct species or distinct varieties, for example, is arbitrary. Individual finches on the Galapagos vary one from another, as do the stress patterns of individual lines of poetry. Whether we label two individuals as members of the same variety, or of different varieties of the same species, or of different species, is arbitrary, and the fact that biologists often agree on the classification tells us about their skill at applying customs of the discipline, but does not imply that the concept 'species' identifies an entity with real, extrasemiological existence. Similarly with poetry, our ability to group two lines with different sound-patterns as examples of iambic pentameter does not imply that the metrical pattern designates some "real" entity. In nature, every individual is unique, and its success does not depend on the degree to which it approximates a pre-given concept of its species. Similarly, in poetry the stress pattern in every line is unique, and its success does *not* depend on its degree of approximation to a pre-given metrical pattern.

On what, then, does the success of a line of poetry depend? A wide variety of factors, of course, but in relation to meter, a line's success depends not on its confining itself to parameters set by regularity, but on its negotiating between regularity and irregularity. In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze makes a distinction that serves well here. "The study of rhythm", he says, "allows us immediately to distinguish two kinds of repetition", cadence-repetition, which is "a regular division of time, an isochronic recurrence of identical elements", and rhythm-repetition, in which "the unequal is the most positive element", and "the reprise of points of inequality, of inflections or of rhythmic events, is more profound than the reproduction of ordinary homogeneous elements" (Deleuze 1993: 21). In poetry, even "formal" poetry, it is not the "isochronic recurrence of identical elements" that creates the beauty of the lines, and the failures of isochronism that need to be explained away; it is the "inflections", the "rhythmic events", that lend beauty, and that theory should aim to comprehend. We sometimes speak as if metrical verse and free verse were hostile countries that share a border, as if one could walk a hundred miles and stay in one country, and then with one step — a step watched by armed militia — cross into the other. But there is no border to be guarded. *All* poetry, whether "formal" or "free verse", operates between the poles of regularity and irregularity. A poem can be close enough to regularity to be (rightly) labeled "metrical" or close enough to irregularity to be (rightly) labeled "free verse", but it is not the case that metrical verse is "really" regular, with a few irregularities to be explained away, or that free verse is "really" irregular, with a little regularity that has slipped in.

A poetic line pursues, or should pursue, the aim not of being metrical, if by that term regularity is implied, but of being melodic. As the poles of excess and deficiency in Aristotelian ethics help to reveal the mean, though neither excess nor deficiency is itself a standard to be pursued, so the poles of regularity and irregularity in meter, neither of which is itself to be pursued in poetry, serve the creation of melody. An ethical mean may be nearer the excess, as courage is nearer the excess (foolhardiness) than the deficiency (timidity), and so may a line of verse be nearer to regularity of



meter, as is Shakespeare's line, cited by Steele, "These violent delights have violent ends", in spite of its one elided and one non-elided 'violent'. Similarly, a mean may be nearer the deficiency, as temperance is nearer self-denial than self-indulgence, and so may a line of verse be nearer to irregularity, as is Walt Whitman's "Lover divine and perfect Comrade". In both cases, though, the lines are melodious precisely because they make use of regularity *and* irregularity. Melody operates on analogy with Heraclitean palintropic harmony. As (according to Heraclitus) "there would be no harmony without high and low notes", and indeed "all things come to pass in accordance with conflict", so in poetry the melody of a line results not from regularity or irregularity but from the tension between the two.

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## The Rhythmical Structure of Iambic Trimeter in Ancient Greek Comedy

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In studies of ancient metrics, the analysis of frequencies was used already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century — at a time when mathematical means did not play a significant role in literary studies and there were no consistent methods for the statistical analysis of poetical rhythm (let us remember that the latter followed the example of these first attempts, cf Belyi 1910). Naturally, research was mainly concerned with hexameter as the most important ancient verse metre, but some analyses of iambic metres have been conducted as well, above all the dialogue verse of tragedy (cf e.g. Korzeniewski 1989).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the contemporary form of quantitative analysis for poetical rhythm was established but, regretfully, the so-called vertical statistics was not put into consistent practice in ancient philology: there are only a few studies, the most remarkable of which is evidently the comparative-statistical research of the rhythmical forms and evolution of Greek hexameter (Gasparov 1975). Consequently, the statistical regularities of the most important ancient verse metre have been described but, at the same time, undeservedly little attention has been paid to the iambic trimeter, which is a verse metre of secondary importance.

Hence, the present research has been carried out to describe rhythmical variations which come into being as a result of realizing the iambic trimeter in ancient Greek, whereas the material of the research consists of comic trimeters which are far more complicated, but considerably less studied than the lyric and tragic

trimeters. In the selection of texts, the conclusive factor was their time of creation. The researches in historical changes of verse rhythemics have shown that even though every author has his individual rhythmical preferences, authors of the same epoch still have similar rhythmical variety, while different rhythmical regularities are found in the texts of another epoch (ib. 1997). As one of the main purposes of the present work is to point out the features which depend on the author and the time of creation, the research material was composed in a way that the chosen authors as well as the texts of one author could be subjected to a comparative analysis. Thus, the material includes one of the early texts and one of the later texts by both Aristophanes and Menander. Aristophanes represents the old comedy, his earlier text is *The Clouds* (the following verse lines have been analysed: 59–221, 223–234, 236–260, 630–699, 723–803, 814–1291) and his later text is *The Frogs* (1–207, 460–532, 738–813, 1119–1250, 1395–1406), Menander represents the new comedy, the chosen texts are *The Peevish Fellow* (1–349, 351–501) and *Epitrepontes* (1–353, 355–363, 445–462, 464–501, 504–512, 514–515, 517–587). Thus, every selection consists of 500 verse lines. In order to carry out statistical analysis, the number of syllables in the chosen texts was determined first and on these grounds the rhythmical pattern was coded for each separate line.

Consequently, the purpose of statistical analysis in the present work is to present the regularities which are characteristic of the structure of iambic trimeter in Greek comedy. But at first it would be necessary to consider the structure of the lyric and tragic trimeter and to give a short account of these features of the comic trimeter which have become evident by means of qualitative analysis.

The ancient Greek iambic trimeter consists of six iambic feet, which join up to pairs to form dipodies or iambic metrons. As in every dipody the first iambus can be replaced with spondee, while the second can not, the sequence X—⌣— evolves, which is an elementary symmetrical unit in verse, the recurrences of which generate iambic metres. Rhythmical variations are possible in employing the principle characteristic of ancient Greek versification, according to which a long syllable (with the quantity of



two moras) is equivalent to two short syllables (both with the quantity of one mora), whereby in certain positions they can freely replace each other. Here we must distinguish the contraction which means the replacement of two short syllables with one long syllable (e.g. in dactylic metres) and the resolution which means the replacement of one long syllable with two short ones (e.g. in iambic and trochaic metres). In determining quantities, the subjective time is considered, as objectively e.g. syllables  $\tau\eta$ - and  $\tau\epsilon\rho$ - were not isochronous, but they were perceived as such. Thus, the syllables  $\tau\eta$ -,  $\tau\epsilon\rho$ -,  $\tau\eta\kappa$ - and  $\tau\epsilon\rho\pi$ - were equivalent to each other, while opposed in its quantity to the syllable  $\tau\epsilon$ - (Kurylowicz 1962).

The rhythemics of iambic trimeter was not determined by contractions, but by resolutions, whereby in the later verse not only strong, but also weak positions could be resolved and, as a result thereof, a specific complicated verse form evolved, where not only the number of syllables was unsteady, but the number of moras as well. At first it was only possible to resolve a long syllable to two short ones ( $\text{—} \rightarrow \cup\cup$ ), but later on it also became possible to resolve an anceps ( $X \rightarrow \cup\cup$ ) or even a short syllable ( $\cup \rightarrow \cup\cup$ ). Consequently, the quantity of unresolved iambic feet is three moras, but the quantity of a resolved so-called "anapaestic" feet is four moras. At the same time the possible number of moras is limited by a certain correspondence rule: resolution can only take place in a strong position or in a weak position, never in both positions at the same time. In accordance with this rule the number of syllables is limited as well: if a weak position is resolved, only one long syllable can occur in a strong position and thus a foot can consist of three syllables maximum.

The structure of the archaic trimeter is not characterized by the freedom which is the typical of the classical trimeter. Resolutions took place only in the first anceps and in the long positions of the first and the second dipodies, the verse ending was fixed:  $X\text{—}\cup\text{—}$ . The most common position for the caesura was usually in the third foot after anceps, but sometimes in the fourth foot after breve. In this epoch, the structure of this metre is regulated by strict rhythmical rules.

While the iambic trimeter was initially mainly the metre of lyric poetry, then further on it was used as a metre of dialogues in drama, whereby the rhythmical rules became freer. As a result, more variations evolve in the rhythmical structure. Resolutions may take place in the first five principia, although less often in the fifth princeps, and only when the adjacent anceps is short (West 1982: 81). Still, they occur only once or, occasionally, twice in a verse line and only in a way that two short syllables would not be separated by word-ends, as carrying the memory of their former unity (Gasparov 1989: 74), e.g. Eur. *Andr.* 47

ὅς δ' ἔστι παῖς μοι μόνος, ὑπεκπέμπω λάθραι.

We can see that an "anapaestic" foot is only allowed at the beginning of a verse line, while "dactyls" occur only in the first and in the third foot. "Tribrachs" (UUU) occur more frequently in all the feet, except for the sixth. It is interesting that in Aeschylus' comedies the quantity of resolutions grows smaller, while that of Sophocles remains more or less at the same level.

As in lyric trimeters, the position for the caesura is in almost all the verses after the second anceps (*penthemimeres*), e.g. Aesch. *Cho.* 85–87

ἐπεὶ πάρεστε | τῆσδε προστροπῆς ἐμοὶ

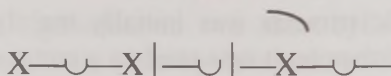
or after the second breve (*hephthemimeres*), e.g. Eur. *Hel.* 1384

ἔδοκα, χρόνια νίπτρα | ποταμίας δρόσου.

Only in about 2% of Aeschylus' trimeters and 1% of Sophocles' and Euripides' trimeters, the caesura comes after the third princeps, separating the line into two equal parts (West 1982: 82–83), e.g. Eur. *Bakch.* 1275

τίς οὖν ἐν οἴκοις παῖς | ἐγένετο σῶ πόσει;

As in iambography, the so-called Porson's law (*lex Porsoniana*) is valid in tragedy as well, according to which a word-end cannot occur immediately after the third anceps:



There are two possible ways of explaining the evolving of such a rule. Firstly, it helps (with the rhythmical constant in the last dipody) to mark the end of a verse, secondly, a long anceps at the end of a word takes too much time and that would break the prosody of the trimeter.

The iambic trimeter of comedy is by its nature freer than the tragic trimeter. There are different viewpoints here: did the trimeter of comedy maintain the character of the spoken language, the freedom of popular poetry which was given up by tragedy or is it the result of the natural development of rhythemics, which can be observed since the archaic epoch (Korzeniewski 1989: 60). The main differences of the comic trimeter from tragedy and lyrics are as follows (West 1982: 88–89):

1. A significant quantity of lines (7,5% in Aristophanes, 15% in Menander) have neither the penthemimeral nor the hepthemimeral caesura. Instead, there can be either the medial caesura (i.e. immediately after the third anceps), e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 101

μεριμνοφροντισται | καλοί τε κάγαθοί,

or no caesura at all, e.g. Arist. *Pax* 831

τὰς ἐνδιαεριανερηνηχέτους πινάς.

2. “Anapaestic” feet are admitted freely, especially in the first, second and fourth feet, provided that there is no resolution in the preceding princeps, e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 47

τίς ὁ νοῦς; τι κόθορνος καὶ ρόπαλον ξυνηλθέτην;

(Still, there are exceptions to this rule, e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 663

ἀλεκτρονὸνα κατὰ τὰντὸ καὶ τὸν ἄρρενα).

3. Porson’s law is ignored (about 20% of trimeters do not follow it, e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 159

τί δῆτ’ ἐκεῖνος εἶπε περὶ τῆς ἐμπίδος)

and all the other rules which concern the avoiding of word-ends are similarly disregarded.



4. The resolved princeps in the fifth foot may be (and in most cases is) combined with the long anceps, e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 176

*εἰ μὴ καταθήσεις δύο δραχμάς, μὴ διαλέγου.*

5. Resolutions are more frequent than in tragedy (47% in Aristophanes, 53% in Menander).

6. The resolved princeps may be divided between words in the following cases: a) one word is appositive to the other, e.g. Arist. *Av.* 181

*ὅτι δὲ πολεῖται τοῦτο καὶ διέρχεται;*

b) the first word is disyllabic, e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 296

*πτωχὸς ἀδικηθεὶς ἐστὶ δυσκολώτατον,*

c) there is elision, e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 257

*ὁ τὴν χλανίδ' ἔχων; οὗτος ἐστὶν ὃν λέγεις,*

d) in fixed phrases, e.g. Arist. *Eq.* 746

*καὶ μὴν ποιήσας αὐτίκα μάλ' ἐκκλησίαν,*

e) exceptionally elsewhere, e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 884

*ὥς τάδικα λέγων ἀνατρέπει τὸν κρείττονα.*

The following analysis aims to determine more exactly the data which are typical to the comic iambus and to characterize its rhythmical variety, whereupon special attention is paid to determining the secondary rhythm of the iambic trimeter. The analysis of rhythmical variety is carried out in three stages.

1. Although every verse is always based on a certain metrical structure, usually it does not succeed in following it perfectly, i.e. several deviations evolve which result in rhythmical variety. The study of variations helps to determine regularities which are typical to a certain verse. These regularities depend on many factors: the language in which a verse is written, the surrounding poetical tradition, etc. But when the regularities have been formulated, it is natural to pay attention to such deviations which arise from the poets' individual preferences. Thus, the purpose of the first stage of analysis is to describe the rhythmical structures of Greek comedians and, proceeding from that, to point out their

common features and differences. The results which are presented in Tab. 1. allow to determine the secondary rhythm of the iambic trimeter and, at the same time, to study the factors which cause certain rhythmical tendencies.

**Table 1.** Variations in verse feet %%

Author	Text	Foot 1	Foot 2	Foot 3	Foot 4	Foot 5	Foot 6
Aristophanes	<i>The Clouds</i>	21,4	18,8	16,2	22	4,8	0,4
	<i>The Frogs</i>	23,4	24	17	24,4	4,8	0,2
Menander	<i>The Peevish Fellow</i>	24	20,8	26,6	18	10,6	0,2
	<i>Epitrepontes</i>	27,4	22,2	13,4	16,8	10,6	0

We can see that the last (i.e. the sixth) foot varies in all the analyzed authors very seldom, as compared with other feet, consequently, it can be considered to be a rhythmical constant, as variations in this position are extremely rare. Of course, such clausula is a very important factor in the rhythmical structure of the whole line. Further analysis will show how the rhythmical constant in the sixth foot influences the rhythm of the verse line in both authors.

In Aristophanes' earlier comedy *The Clouds* as well as in his later comedy *The Frogs*, the fifth foot adjacent to the sixth foot which has an extremely low rate of variety is in most cases the so-called "pure iambus", i.e. there is no contrast, but on the contrary, we are dealing with rhythmically similar units. At the same time, the quantity of resolutions is remarkably larger in the fourth foot. In the third foot, the number of resolutions decreases again. The data of the first half of the verse is somewhat different in *The Clouds* and *The Frogs*. In *The Frogs*, the quantity of resolutions is smaller than in *The Clouds*, it is characteristic that the number of variations is highest in the first foot (the so-called "progressive" rhythm towards the beginning of verse line), while in the later comedy *The Frogs* the number of variations is almost equal in the

second and the first foot. We can see all the described tendencies e.g. in Arist. *Nub.* 725

ὑπὸ τῶν κόρεων εἴ μού τι περιλειφθήσεται

or Arist. *Ran.* 134

ἀλλ' ἀπολέσαιμ' ἂν ἐγκεφάλου θρίω δύο.

It is typical to Menander's rhythm that the second half of the verse appears to be rather contrastive: in his earlier play *The Peevish Fellow*, the number of variations increases progressively until the third foot, drops in the second foot and increases again in the first foot. Thus, the earlier Menander's verse is quite different from that of Aristophanes. Cf e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 241

ἡμιν. ὁ πατὴρ ἀλλότριος εἶναι βούλεται.

At the same time, in *Epitrepontes*, which belongs to Menander's later period, we can see the rhythm which resembles Aristophanic verse, being more salient, though. The contrast between the second and the third foot is remarkable: only the differences between Menander's fifth and sixth foot are more contrastive (more than 10%). Such is e.g. Men. *Epitr.* 330

τίνος ἔνεκεν παίδων ἐπιθυμεῖν σοι δοκῶ;

Consequently, there are two main rhythmical types of the ancient Greek comic trimeter, both obviously strongly induced by the rhythmical constant at the end of verse. The ideal form of the first of them (which also dominates in both the Aristophanic and Menander's verse) appears as follows: 1/1/0/1/0/0, where 1 designates a resolved foot, 0 an unresolved foot, i.e. a so-to-say "pure" iambus. Such verse is in essence based on rhythmical opposition of dipodies: the first, often resolved dipody contrasts with the second, less resolved dipody. The ideal form of the other type, which is characteristic of earlier Menander, appears as follows: 1/0/1/0/0/0: clearly, we are dealing here with a rhythm that is based on the alternation of variations in the verse feet (the so-called dissimilative rhythm). It culminates with the highest rate of resolutions in the third foot — it is important that in other analysed texts this position appears to have one of the lowest rate of resolutions).



Hence, it becomes evident that in comic the iambus the main versification principle is the rhythmical opposition of smaller (feet) or larger (dipody) metrically symmetrical units. How this principle is put into practice in real poetry depends on the individual preferences of each author. These will be presented in the next stage of analysis.

2. The second stage of analysis aims to study variative forms of the verse feet (cf Table No 2-5).

**Table 2.** Rhythmical variety in comedy *The Clouds*:

[illegible]Table 3. Rhythmical variety in comedy *The Frogs*:[illegible]

**Table 4.** Rhythmical variety in comedy *The Peevish Fellow*:

	Foot1		Foot2		Foot3		Foot4		Foot5		Foot6	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
UUU			57	11%			51	10%				
UU—			47	9,40%			39	7,80%			1	0,20%
U—			396	79%			410	82%			499	100%
xUU	58	12%			67	13%			34	6,80%		
xU—	62	12%			16	3,20%			19	3,80%		
x—	380	76%			417	83%			447	89%		
Total	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%

**Table 5.** Rhythmical variety in comedy *Epitrepontes*:

	Foot1		Foot2		Foot3		Foot4		Foot5		Foot6	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
UUU			59	12%			54	11%				
UU—			52	10%			30	6,00%				
U—			389	78%			416	83%			500	100%
xUU	71	14%			55	11%			39	7,80%		
xU—	66	13%			12	2,40%			14	2,80%		
x—	363	73%			433	87%			447	89%		
Total	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%	500	100%

In the structure of the verse foot, we must distinguish weak positions (i.e. anceps or breve) and strong positions. When a weak position is resolved, a foot would take the following shape: UU—, when a strong position is resolved, a foot would look like this: UUU. The purpose of the given stage of analysis is to study the positions in which the resolutions are more likely to take place.

It appeared that in iambic trimeter of *The Clouds* there are no considerable differences in resolving ancipitia and principitia in the first, forth and fifth verse foot. In the second foot, there are more resolutions of the weak position UU— (the given resolution is that of the breve), in the third foot, the resolutions of the strong position UUU dominate. As the last syllable of the verse is always long regardless of the real quantity, the resolution of the princeps

in the sixth foot is not possible, thus, the analysis did not include this position. Such rhythm in *The Clouds* could be illustrated with the following scheme: XUXUU—|XUU—|XUXU— (such a scheme expresses the relationship between the variations but not the actual statistics). Cf e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 640

ὕπ' ἀλφитаμοιβοῦ παρεκόπην διχοινίῳ.

At the same time in *The Frogs* only in the fifth foot the number of the resolved ancipitia and principitia is about the same. In the first foot, there are more  $\cup\cup$ — resolutions, while in the second, third and fourth foot, the resolutions take place rather in the strong position ( $\cup\cup\cup$  and  $\cup\cup\cup$ ). We can see the rhythm of *The Frogs* in the following scheme:  $X\cup\cup\cup\cup|X\cup\cup\cup\cup|X\cup\cup$ .

Menander's rhythmic is quite similar to that of later Aristophanes. The analysis of both *The Peevish Fellow* and *Epitrepontes* shows that in the first, second and fifth foot the differences do not exceed the significance level. In the third and in the fourth foot the variation  $\cup\cup\text{—}$  prevails. Menander's preferences are presented in the following scheme:  $X\cup\cup\cup\cup|X\cup\cup\cup\cup|X\text{—}\cup$ . Cf. e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 101

ἐκεῖ περιφθειρόμενον ἀχράδας ἢ πολὺν.

3. So far the analysis concentrated on determining the variative forms of separate positions. In order to do so, the verse was disjoined into elementary symmetrical periods, i.e. verse feet. Such analysis is effective in determining the nature of secondary rhythm, but at the same time it is not sufficient to get the whole picture of the rhythmical structure of verse: we have a description of the components of verse, but we have no idea of their interrelationship. The third stage of the analysis treats the verse as a unitary structure, the components of which are not independently whole, but are directly connected with the context, i.e. the other feet in the same verse line. Thus, to describe the mechanisms which determine the rhythm of the ancient comic trimeter, the frequencies of every rhythmical form in the studied texts have been computed and the synopsis of the most frequent forms of different authors will follow.



In accordance with the previous results of the analysis, it is not surprising that verses with no resolutions prevail in the observed texts. Among the resolved verses, the ones with only one resolved position are similarly prevalent. Thus, in *The Clouds*, the verse form which follows exactly the ideal scheme  $X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (33,4% of the sample) was dominant, e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 9

*ἐγείρεται τῆς νυκτος, ἀλλὰ πέρδεται.*

The following forms were also frequent:  $X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (8,2%), e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 153

*ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τῆς λεπτότητος τῶν φρενῶν,*

$X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (8,2%), e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 832

*σὺ δ' εἰς τοσοῦτον τῶν μανιῶν ἐλήλυθας,*

$X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\cup\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (6%), e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 773

*σοφῶς γε νῆ τὰς Χάριτας. ΣΤΡ. οἴμ' ὥς ἦδομαι.*

There were less forms with two resolved positions. Among such forms, forms like  $X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\cup\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (2%) prevailed, e.g. Arist. *Nub.* 152

*ταύτας ὑπολύσας ἀνεμέτρει τὸ χαρίον.*

Likewise, the most frequent form in *The Clouds* is  $X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (33,2%), an example of which is e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 518

*ἤμελλ' ἀφαιρεῖν χῆ τράπεζ' εἰσήρετο.*

The frequency rates of other forms range as follows:  $X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (8,6%), e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 111

*ἔχρω τόθ', ἦνικ' ἦλθες ἐπὶ τον Κέρβερον*

$\cup\cup\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (7,4%), e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 143

*μετὰ ταῦτ' ὄφεις καὶ θηρί' ὄψει μυρία*

$X\text{---}\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\cup\cup\text{---}|\text{X}\text{---}\cup\text{---}$  (6,4%), e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 112

*τούτους φράσον μοι, λιμένας, ἀρτοπώλια*

Similarly to *The Clouds*, the most frequent verse with two resolved positions in *The Frogs* is X—|X—|X— (2,4%), e.g. Arist. *Ran.* 69

ἐλθεῖν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον. ΗΡΑ. πότερον εἰς Ἄιδου κάτω;

The same regularities as in the Aristophanic trimeter are in force in Menander's verse: great percentage of unresolved verses (35,2%), a tendency to resolve only one position in a verse line. The most frequent of such forms are X—|X—|X— (7,8%), e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 147

οὐ πάνυ φιλάνθρωπον βλέπειν μοι φαίνεται,

X—|X—|X— (6,4%), e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 25

ἐν γειτόνων, οὐ διατρέφει νυνὶ κακῶς

and X—|X—|X— (5%), e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 47

καὶ γὰρ προσιόνθ' ὄραν δοκῶ μοι τουτονί.

Sometimes, though, verse forms with two resolutions occur, such as X—|X—|X— (2,2%), e.g. Men. *Dysc.* 31

καὶ γραῦν θεράπαιναν, ξυλοφορῶν σκάπτων τ', αἰ

In *Epileptontes*, the percentage of unresolved verses was 34,6%, verse forms with one resolution align as follows: X—|X—|X— (7,4%), e.g. Men. *Epilept.* 3

ἐστὶν περὶ τούτων. ΔΑ. βουλομαι κρινώμεθα,

—|X—|X— (7,2%), e.g. Men. *Epilept.* 68

τὸ δ' ἐγὼ μόνου δ' εὐρόντος οὐ παρὼν τότε

and X—|X—|X— (6,8%), e.g. Men. *Epilept.* 90

τούτου· σὺ ἐπόησας με δούς. νῦν γνωστέον.

The forms with two resolutions are quite rare in *Epileptontes*, the most frequent is the rhythmical form —|X—|X— (1,2%), e.g. Men. *Epilept.* 48

ἀγαθὸν γένοιτο, Δᾶε, παρ' ἑκάστον λέγων.

It is important to note that the forms presented above characterize only ½ of actual cases at best: there are many different forms and their rhythmical spectrum is diverse which confirms the freedom of comic versification. Still, we can make certain observations on the basis of the results set out above.

It is notable that in the Aristophanic trimeters in *The Clouds* and *The Frogs* as well as in Menander's trimeters in *The Peevish Fellow* the resolved feet tend to be placed in each other's vicinity, as if variations contaminated their surroundings. For instance, in the given texts the resolutions of the princeps in the third foot are quite frequent, but especially in the cases where the breve in the second foot is resolved. But at the same time the resolutions do not for the most part include more than two consecutive feet: here the contrastive (dissimilative) principle is in force as well, opposing a resolved foot to an unresolved one.

In conclusion it can be said that in the ancient comic trimeter the most important rhythmical factors are the rhythmical constant at the end of a line and the contrastive principle of versification which dissimilates the feet or dipodies from one another. Thus, it is typical that at the end of a verse the rhythm corresponds to metre, as in the fourth foot and at the beginning of a verse the resolutions are most frequent. It is also highly characteristic that resolutions tend to take place once in a line. A detailed analysis of variative forms revealed that trimeters in both Aristophanic texts are more similar to one another and that the structure of the trimeters in both Menander's texts also resemble one another.

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**Ein "etablierter Außenseiter":  
Friedrich Maximilian Klinger und  
die *Geschichte eines Teutschen*  
der neusten Zeit**

THOMAS SALUMETS

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### 1. Vorbemerkung und Fragestellung

Ob als Autor der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* und des Dramas, dem der Sturm und Drang seinen Namen verdankt, als Jugendfreund Goethes, oder als Beamter am Zarenhof in St. Petersburg, Friedrich Maximilian Klinger bleibt das, was man mit Norbert Elias einen "etablierten Außenseiter" nennen könnte: ein Mann von Rang und Namen, der jedoch zu den Geringgeschätzten, den Unbequemen zählt und so — in den Augen seiner Zeitgenossen sowie im kulturellen Gedächtnis der Deutschen — ohne je ganz vergessen zu werden, lediglich am Rande existiert.

Es ist an dieser Stelle nicht möglich, den in diesem Zusammenhang wichtigen wechselseitigen Bezügen, Zwängen und Machtbalancen im Einzelnen nachzugehen. Ein cursorischer Blick auf einige Verflechtungszusammenhänge, in denen Klingers *Geschichte eines Teutschen* steht und in die Klinger während der Arbeit an diesem Roman selbst geraten war, muß hier genügen. Im Mittelpunkt dieses Beitrags steht deshalb der Versuch, folgende Fragen zu beantworten:

- Welche literaturgeschichtliche Bedeutung(en) hat die *Geschichte eines Teutschen*?
- Was sind entstehungsgeschichtlich wichtige Gesichtspunkte der ersten autorisierten Ausgabe der *Geschichte eines Teutschen*?

- Unter welchen Umständen wird die Gesamtausgabe (*Werke*) geplant und verwirklicht?

## 2. Klingers Romanzyklus und die *Geschichte eines Teutschen*

Eine gewisse Bedeutung hat die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* in der Forschungsgeschichte des Bildungsromans (vgl. Selbmann 1988). Gefestigt wurde dieser Status durch den Neudruck einiger weitgehend unbekannter Texte Johann Karl Simon Morgensterns (1770–1852), des Professors für Altphilologie, Eloquenz und Ästhetik an der Kayserlichen Universität Dorpat (heute: Tartu Ülikool, Estland) (Selbmann 1988: 45–99). Morgenstern, der zum engeren Freundeskreis Klingers zählte, war es, der den Begriff 'Bildungsroman' geprägt hat. Drei Vorlesungen Morgensterns aus den Jahren zwischen 1810 und 1820 sind in diesem Zusammenhang wichtig:

- 1810 *Ueber den Geist und Zusammenhang einer Reihe philosophischer Romane*
- 1819 *Ueber das Wesen des Bildungsromans*
- 1820 *Zur Geschichte des Bildungsromans*

Zu bedenken ist bei der in diesen Vorträgen vorgenommenen Begriffsbestimmung u.a., daß für Morgenstern nicht etwa die Romanhelden als Bezugsrahmen dienen. Sie rücken in den Hintergrund. Was zählt, sind vielmehr die Kompetenzen, die "Denkart und Charakterstärke" des Schriftstellers selbst (Selbmann 1988: 53). Es ist der Bildungsweg Klingers, der Morgenstern deshalb vor allem interessiert. So kommt es denn auch dazu, daß Klinger und "die Geschichte seiner eigenen Bildung und Vollen- dung", wie es Morgenstern formuliert, gewissermaßen exemplarisch zum Bewertungsmaßstab für seine Romane wird (ebd. 52). Entsprechend heißt es in Morgensterns 1810 in Dorpat gehaltenem Vortrag zu Klinger: "Werfen wir einen Blick auf das äußere Leben und die Bildungsgeschichte des Mannes, von welchem hier die Rede ist: so scheint /.../, daß auf Richtung seines Geistes und auf die Bildung seines Charakters /.../ vorzüglich vier Umstände gewirkt haben: sein Studium Französischer Schriftsteller; sein



Lesen der Alten; seine Reisen; sein vieljähriges Leben in der Hauptstadt des größten Nordischen Reiches, nahe dem Kaiserhofe und den Geschäften. Was sein Studium Französischer Schriftsteller anlangt, so zeigt sich dasselbe hauptsächlich in der tief eindringenden Würdigung Rousseau's in seiner *Geschichte eines Teutschen der neuesten Zeit* [...]" (ebd. 47). Es ist diese, in erster Linie biographische Orientierung Morgensterns und weniger die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* (oder einer der anderen Romane Klingers), die Klinger einen festen Platz in der Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans gesichert hat — einen festen Platz allerdings nur am Rande. Denn die "eigentliche Geschichte der Bildungsroman-Forschung" beginne nicht etwa mit Morgenstern, behauptet Selbmann, sondern erst mit Wilhelm Dilthey (ebd. 20).

Freilich interessiert die *Geschichte eines Teutschen der neusten Zeit* auch als literarisches Dokument der Rousseau-Rezeption. Klinger setzt sich -neben seiner *Geschichte Raphaels de Aquillas* (1793) — insbesondere in der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* mit Rousseau auseinander (Volhard 1973: 76–83). Franz Prosch, der zu den ersten gehört, die ausführlicher über Klingers *Geschichte eines Teutschen* und Rousseau geschrieben haben, spricht von einem produktiven "Abhängigkeitsverhältnis" (Prosch 1884: 44). Klingers Roman sei, so Prosch, "ein deutscher *Emil*" (ebd. 17).

Wichtiger allerdings ist die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* für manche als literarische Auseinandersetzung mit der Französischen Revolution: etwa für den Klinger-Kenner Hering. Er vertritt den Standpunkt, der Roman sei überhaupt "der erste bedeutende Zeitroman der modernen deutschen Literatur" (Hering 1966: 324). Mit dem Begriff 'Zeitroman' und 'Roman der Spätaufklärung' wird Klingers *Geschichte eines Teutschen* auch in der neueren Forschung gern etikettiert (Titzmann 1990: 242, Mahoney 1988: 42, Kaiser 1990: 50).

Als fester Bestandteil des groß angelegten, in der deutschen Literatur außergewöhnlichen Romanbauwerks stößt die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* auf weniger Resonanz. Auch unter Klingers Zeitgenossen war das schon so: Karl Morgenstern schreibt in seinem 1824 veröffentlichten Vortrag: "Als ein großes, unter einander in Geist und Tendenz verflochtenes Ganze stehn sie in der deutschen Litteratur allein da, als Ganzes noch immer nicht

allgemein genug nach Zusammenhang und Werth erkannt und gewürdigt" (Selbmann 1988: 91).

Die weitgehende 'Tabuisierung', oder bestenfalls pauschale Behandlung der Romane Klingers als Zyklus (wichtige Ausnahmen: Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896, Hering 1982, Hill 1982, Segeberg 1974, Titzmann 1990) hat dazu geführt, daß Klinger als Romancier eine literaturgeschichtliche Marginalie geblieben ist. Die bautechnische und damit Hand in Hand gehende ästhetische und intellektuelle Leistung der Romanreihe ist es jedoch, die auch die *Geschichte eines Teutschen*, zumindest als Teil der Dekade, im deutschen Sprachraum zum literarischen Ereignis macht. Mehr noch: mit den relationalen Denkmustern, die dem Romanbauwerk zugrundeliegen, ist Klinger seiner Zeit voraus. "Was Klingers Texte von der zeitgenössischen Literatur abhebt, sind nicht die Techniken literarischer Darstellung philosophischer Probleme im Erzähltext; es sind vielleicht die Explizitheit, Konsequenz und Radikalität seiner Behandlung dieser Fragen, es sind vermutlich die von ihm angedeuteten Lösungen, es ist sicher sein Experiment eines Zyklus aufeinander bezogener philosophischer Romane" (Titzmann 1990: 247).

Auf die Interdependenz der einzelnen Romane weist Klinger seinen Königsberger Freund Georg Heinrich Ludwig Nicolovius hin. Eng hänge die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* mit seinen bereits erschienenen Romanen zusammen. In einem vom 5. August 1797 datierten Brief heißt es: „Am ganzen Gang, und durch den Schluß werden Sie sehen, daß es mit den ersten fünf Werken wieder verbunden ist." (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896: 35). In der Zeitspanne von 1791 bis 1797 hatte Klinger bereits folgende Romane veröffentlicht:

- *Faust Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* (1791)
- *Geschichte Giafars des Barmeciden* (1792/94)
- *Geschichte Raphaels de Aquillas* (1793)
- *Reisen vor der Sündfluth* (1795)
- *Der Faust der Morgenländer* (1797)

Noch weitere fünf Romane sollten folgen, denn Klinger arbeitete, wie er 1809 in der "Vorrede zu den philosophischen Romanen" bekanntgab, an einem Zyklus von zehn Romanen. „Ich wagte in den folgenden Bänden, was so viel mir bekannt ist, kein Schrift-

steller vor mir gewagt hat, ich faßte den wenigstens kühnen Entschluß auf einmal den Plan zu zehen ganz verschiedenen Werken zu entwerfen, und zwar so, daß jedes derselben ein für sich bestehendes Ganze ausmachte, und sich am Ende doch alle zu einem Hauptzweck vereinigten." (iii).

Neben der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* sind 1798 noch zwei weitere Romane erschienen: *Sahir, Eva's Ersgeborener im Paradiese* und *Der Weltmann und der Dichter. Das zu frühe Erwachen des Genius der Menschheit* erschien 1803 als Fragment. Den zehnten Roman hat Klinger vermutlich nie geschrieben.

Obwohl Klingers Dekade unvollendet blieb, stellt der Zyklus auch intellektuell ein Ereignis dar. Die zyklische Form erlaubt es nicht nur, "Fragen ohne Antworten" aufzuwerfen, sie ermögliche vielmehr "die implizite Relativierung philosophischer Positionen", was in der deutschen Spätaufklärung zu einem einzigartigen Versuch "systematischer Selbstaufhebung der Aufklärungsphilosophie" geführt habe (Titzmann 1990: 284). Dem *Teutschen* komme dabei zudem der besondere Rang eines Schlüsselromans zu. Er stelle das dar, „was den Pivot alles meines Schreibens ausmacht“, so Klinger in dem bereits zitierten Brief an Nicolovius (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896: 35).

Warum ist die Romansequenz literaturgeschichtlich dennoch eine Fußnote geblieben? Zu bedenken ist in diesem Zusammenhang u.a. folgendes: Ganz abgesehen von den Widerständen gegenüber einer relational (und prozessual) orientierten Rationalität und Darstellungsweise (vgl. etwa die Rezeption anderer Dialogromane), fällt es nicht leicht, sich sowohl durch die Materialfülle als auch durch das Netzwerk von Denkmustern des Romanbauwerks hindurchzufinden. Weiterhin ist die Dekade Fragment geblieben. Auch leisten die Romane Klingers — etwa im Vergleich zu Karl Philipp Moritz' *Anton Reiser* oder Goethes *Wilhelm Meister* — einen relativ geringen Beitrag zur 'Kunst der Selbstebeobachtung', der 'Erfahrungsseelenkunde'. Der Psychologisierung des Romans mißt die deutsche Literaturgeschichtsschreibung jedoch größere Bedeutung zu als der Dekonstruktion und relational orientierten Handhabung aufklärerischer Denkmuster wie sie die Romane Klingers darstellen. Daß Klinger aus dem russischen Ausland für eine deutsche Leserschaft schrieb, der er



und die ihm zunehmend fremd geworden war, hat die Rezeption seiner Werke möglicherweise auch behindert und zum Außen-seiterstatus des Schriftstellers Klinger beigetragen.

### 3. Die Ausgabe erster Hand

Entstanden ist die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* in Rußland. Daß Klinger von Deutschland an den Zarenhof nach St. Petersburg übersiedelte, verdankte der Dramatiker und Romancier den weitgehend unbeabsichtigten Folgen seiner Bemühungen um eine Karriere im Militär.

Unter Vermittlung von Frankreich und Rußland wurde am 13. Mai 1779 der Friede von Teschen geschlossen. Der Bayerische Erbfolgekrieg (1778/79) war damit beendet und die kaiserlichen 'Corps des Volontaires' wurden aufgelöst. Betroffen davon war auch der damals 27-jährige Klinger. Er wurde aus einem österreichischen Freikorps (Chevalier de Wolter) entlassen.

Mit dem Kriegsende waren die Aussichten, erneut in kaiserliche Dienste aufgenommen zu werden, ungünstig geworden. Dies galt insbesondere für die weniger bedeutenden deutschen Höfe. Diesen Sachverhalt beschreibt Klinger in einem vom 21. Februar 1780 datierten Brief an seinen Darmstädter Jugendfreund Ernst Schleiermacher: „Jezt sind aber durch den Frieden alle Stellen übervoll /.../ Freylich wärs, so lang's Friede wär, hübsch im Dienst von Hessen; aber da mach ich mir keine Hofnung, weil an kleinen Höfen dies eine Ressource vor Inländer ist!“ (Rieger 1880: 425). In dieser Situation ist Klinger auf Hilfe angewiesen. Obwohl er mittellos ist, bleibt der Leutnant a.D. jedoch zuversichtlich. Er hofft durch Empfehlungsschreiben, „an größern Plätzen“ — so heißt es weiter in dem Brief an Schleiermacher — „das tükische Ding von Glük habhaft zu werden“ (ebd.).

Klingers Optimismus macht sich bezahlt. Prinz Friedrich Eugen von Württemberg, dessen Tochter — Prinzessin Sophie Dorothea — seit 1776 mit dem russischen Großfürsten Paul I. Als Maria Fedorovna verheiratet war, verhilft Klinger zu einer Stelle. In Deutschland kann er allerdings nicht bleiben. Das Angebot gilt für den Hof in St. Petersburg. Klinger nimmt an und macht sich

noch in den letzten Sommertagen des Jahres 1780 auf die Reise. Mit der Ankunft in der Residenzstadt Ende September beginnt für den Theaterdichter und Soldaten ein neuer und in vieler Hinsicht auch außergewöhnlich erfolgreicher Lebensabschnitt. Immerhin sollte er es "vom blutarmen deutschen Studenten", wie es Fanny Tarnow (1783–1862) in ihrem 1833 erschienenen Roman *Zwei Jahre in Petersburg* formulierte, "bis zum reichen russischen General im Civilidienst" bringen (60). Daß es Klinger für russische Verhältnisse finanziell relativ gut ging, daran besteht kein Zweifel. Ob er nun "reich" war, wie es Fanny Tarnow schildert, soll dahingestellt bleiben. Wie dem auch sei, der Anfang seiner steilen Karriere ist freilich eher bescheiden. Zunächst findet der "Löwenblutsäufer" der Geniezeit — so taufte ihn Wieland — als Vorleser und Ordonnanzoffizier am kaiserlichen Hof in St. Petersburg Anstellung. Dennoch gibt sich Klinger, wenigstens in seinen Briefen nach Deutschland, mit seiner Situation zufrieden. „Ich weiß," schreibt er 1782 an seinen Jugendfreund, „wie man sich in seine Lage fügen muß, und thue es herzlich gern. Tausende beneiden meine Lage und haben recht" (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896: 3).

Bemerkenswert ist auch ein anderer Umstand. Unter der Herrschaft dreier Petersburger Zaren — Katharina II. (1762–1796), Paul I. (1796–1801) und Alexander I. (1801–1825) — gelingt es Klinger, trotz der z.T. äußerst widrigen politischen Umstände, seine über Jahre vor der russischen Zensur geheimgehaltene schriftstellerische Tätigkeit fortzusetzen.

Das Netzwerk von Machtbalancen, in dem Klinger sich während der Niederschrift und der Publikation der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* bewegt, zeichnet sich, soweit überhaupt rekonstruierbar, durch ein relativ großes Machtgefälle zuungunsten des Frankfurter Konstabler-Sohnes aus.

Der Roman entsteht in einer Zeit, in der Katharina II. "scharfe Maßnahmen ergriff, um Russland vor den Wirkungen der französischen Revolution abzuschirmen" (von Rauch 1974: 101). Klinger war bekannt für seine sozialkritische Haltung. Deshalb war er, trotz seiner Beziehungen am Zarenhof, gerade in dieser Zeit besonders gefährdet. Das Schicksal Alexander Radischchevs (1749–1802) mag das Risiko, das Klinger mit seiner schriftstelleri-

schen Tätigkeit einging, stellvertretend verdeutlichen: Radishchevs Schrift *Eine Reise von St. Petersburg nach Moskau* (1790) wurde von der Zensur verboten, er selbst zum Tode verurteilt. Obgleich das Urteil nicht vollstreckt wurde, mußte Radishchev in die Verbannung nach Sibirien (Edie, Scanlan and Zeldin 1976: 65).

Nicht nur die zunehmend prekäre öffentliche Situation, sondern auch private Krisen erschweren Klingers Lage. So etwa steht es schlecht um seine Gesundheit. Sie sei, klagt er in einem Brief, „sehr zerrüttet“. (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896:29). Darüber hinaus sehnt er sich nach seiner Heimat und seinen Jugendfreunden. Im Frühjahr 1795 erwägt er denn auch ernsthaft die Ausreise aus dem russischen Reich. Er will sich an der „Bergstrasse oder am Rhein“ niederlassen (ebd. 29). Seine Hoffnungen werden jedoch enttäuscht. Wegen den zunehmenden außenpolitischen Abschottungstendenzen des russischen Reiches und einer steigenden Inflationsrate sieht sich Klinger gezwungen, auf eine Rückkehr nach Deutschland und damit auf das zu verzichten, wovon er sich zu diesem Zeitpunkt ein hohes Maß an Sinnerfüllung verspricht. Noch Jahre quält ihn der Wunsch, nach Deutschland zurückzukehren (ebd. 41, 115). Immer wieder trifft er neue Vorbereitungen, macht Pläne. Sein Wunsch sollte jedoch nie in Erfüllung gehen. Rußland bleibt — bis zu seinem Tode im Jahre 1831 — für über fünfzig Jahre — und über weite Strecken notgedrungen — seine ‘Heimat’. Das ist die Kehrseite einer ansonsten freilich glänzenden Karriere.

Auch der Thronwechsel im November 1796 bringt keine wesentliche Erleichterung. Klinger wird, nach der Aussage eines seiner Zeitgenossen, im Gegenteil “Zeuge großer Begebenheiten /.../ zu einer Zeit, die niemand zurückwünschen darf” (Selbmann 1988: 49). Paul I. “übte eine Schreckensher[r]schaft, bei der sich wenigstens in seinem nächsten Gesichtskreise, der Hauptstadt, niemand mehr sicher fühlte”, so das Urteil des Klinger-Biographen Rieger (Rieger 1896: 224).

Dennoch — und wahrscheinlich auch deshalb — arbeitet Klinger insgeheim an seinem Romanwerk weiter. Im Juli 1797 ist das Manuskript für die erste autorisierte Ausgabe der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach fertiggestellt. In einem Brief an den Königsberger Freund Georg Heinrich Ludwig



Nicolovius, datiert vom 15. Juli, heißt es: „Nun sage ich Ihnen nur, daß das Mspt zu Ende war, bevor Sie Rußland ganz verließen. So eben schreibe ich die letzten Bogen ab, die sich bis auf 60 belaufen.“ (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896:33). Am 5. August 1797 schreibt Klinger bezüglich des Manuskripts einen weiteren Brief an Nicolovius. Dieses Mal erwähnt er jedoch den Titel des Romans. Das Manuskript hatte Nicolovius inzwischen erhalten. „Ich bedaure nur daß Sie mein Mspt nicht durchsehen konnten. Der Titel: Geschichte eines Teutschen der neusten Zeit schien mir bezeichnend u so wählt ich ihn.“ (ebd. 35). Vermutlich im Februar 1798 ist das erste gedruckte Exemplar der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* unterwegs zu Klinger nach St. Petersburg (ebd. 37).

Die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* wurde, wie alle in Rußland verfaßten Werke des Dichter-Generals, im Ausland gedruckt. Dies geschah aus Rücksicht auf die sich insbesondere unter Paul I. ständig verschärfende Zensur. Die Mehrzahl der Romane erscheint aus diesem Grund zunächst sogar anonym. Selbst die Ankündigung der *Geschichte eines Teutschen*, die in der *Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* im Mai 1798 publiziert wird, erfolgt ohne Angabe des Verfassers (653). Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach geht dies auf den Wunsch Klingers zurück. In einem Brief an seinen Verleger Johann Friedrich Hartknoch schreibt Klinger in dieser Angelegenheit: „Der Avis au lecteur, den Sie in die Litt: [Literaturzeitung] setzen wollen, muß nur unterzeichnet werden: der Verfasser genannter Werke, u kein Nahme, mein Lieber; es ist zu früh dazu.“ (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896:37). Die Vorsichtsmaßnahme erweist sich als begründet. Die *Geschichte eines Teutschen* wird von dem staatlichen zaristischen Zensor F. O. Tumanski in Rußland verboten (Smoljan 1962:192). Der Autor Klinger, offiziell als solcher im russischen Reich nicht bekannt, bleibt weitgehend verschont. Überliefert ist die Ausgabe erster Hand wie folgt:

*Geschichte eines Teutschen/der/neusten Zeit./Mag auch angeborner Sinn sich verbergen?/Pindar./Leipzig 1798,/bei Johann Friedrich Hartknoch./*

1 Bl. Titel, S. [i]-vi *Nachricht an das Publikum*<sup>1</sup>, 1 Bl. Nebentitel, S. [1]-568, 1 Bl. *Errata*<sup>2</sup>. 8° Satzspiegel: ca. 12,6 cm. x ca. 6,3 cm. Fraktur. Vorlage: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel (Sig.: Lo 3731).

#### 4. Die Werke-Edition

Im Jahre 1801 fällt Paul I. einem — unter Führung des St. Petersburger Generalgouverneurs (P.A. Pahlen, 1745–1826) vorbereiteten und ausgeführten Mordanschlag zum Opfer.

Mit dem Thronfolger, Alexander I., beginnt für Klinger ein zunächst vergleichsweise entspannter und vor allem hauptberuflich (d.h. im öffentlichen Dienst) produktiver Lebensabschnitt im Zarenreich. Innerhalb kürzester Zeit avanciert der Dichter-General in den Kreis der einflußreichsten Persönlichkeiten im russischen Bildungswesen. Einen weiteren persönlichen Höhepunkt bildet die Publikation seiner gesammelten *Werke* (1809–1815/16). Auch die *Geschichte eines Deutschen* ist Teil der Gesamtausgabe.

Trotz dieser Erfolge bleibt jedoch das Stigma des Außenseiters an Klinger haften. Er ist sich seiner sozialen Lage, zumal als Schriftsteller, durchaus bewußt. Sie schmerzt ihn sehr: „Für mich ist jedes Buch, das ich abgeschickt habe, als habe ich es in den Ocean geworfen, denn ich vernehme nichts davon.“ (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896: 63).

Selbst als etablierter Zarendiener, vermag er sich letztlich nicht durchzusetzen. Er, der „Fremdling ohne Anhang und Herkunft“, muß den Machtstärkeren weichen — zunächst der einflußreichen baltischen Ritterschaft und den Professoren an der Kayserlichen Universität Dorpat, dann dem reaktionären Adel in St. Petersburg (Rieger 1896: 615).

An weiteren glanzvollen Erfolgen in zaristischen Diensten fehlt es Klinger, trotz aller Widerstände, freilich nicht. So bekleidet er

<sup>1</sup> *Nachricht an das Publikum* nicht in allen eingesehenen Exemplaren. Vgl. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München (Sig.:P.O.germ.729ni).

<sup>2</sup> *Errata* nicht in allen eingesehenen Exemplaren. Vgl. UB Tartu/Estland (Sig.:Mrg. 4328).

z.B. von 1803 bis Ende 1816 das hohe Amt des Kurators der Universität Dorpat. Die Universität wurde 1632 als schwedische Hochschule gegründet (*Academia Gustaviana*; später *Academia Gustavo-Carolina*). Während des Nordischen Krieges (1700–1721), nachdem russische Truppen Estland und Livland erobert hatten, mußte die Universität geschlossen werden. Erst im Jahre 1802 konnte der Lehrbetrieb wieder aufgenommen werden. Die Amtssprache war Deutsch. Die Lehranstalt stand jedoch unter russischer Verwaltung. Klinger wurde im Jahre 1814 die Ehrendoktorwürde der Universität Dorpat verliehen.

Obwohl er in Rußland nur einem kleinen Kreis als Schriftsteller bekannt sein durfte, versucht sich Klinger auch weiter als Dramatiker und Romancier zu profilieren. Kurz vor seinem Amtsantritt als Kurator, im Jahre 1802, schreibt er Nicolovius von seiner Absicht, seine „Werke in 11 Bänden zusammen drucken“ zu lassen (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896:55). Absatzschwierigkeiten, aber auch Mißverständnisse zwischen Autor und Verleger verzögern die Veröffentlichung. Darüber hinaus lassen ihn seine Pflichten als Kurator kaum Zeit für die geplante Edition.

Was er an Machtpotential als Schriftsteller in diesen Jahren einbüßt, scheint er als Bediensteter des Zaren auszugleichen. Vor allem in seiner Vermittlerrolle zwischen der Universitätsverwaltung der neugegründeten Universität Dorpat und dem Ministerium für Volksaufklärung übt er einen relativ großen Einfluß aus. Er prägt in entscheidendem Maße das intellektuelle, administrative und politische Profil der Universität (Kudu 1975: 48–59, Salumets 1989b: 283–300), der ja auch Livland, Estland, Kurland und Finnland als Schulbezirke unterstellt waren. Einbußen erlitt dabei allerdings sein soziales 'Kapital' (Bourdieu): "Klinger's shrewd estimate of what was possible for a 'German' university in the Russian empire, his skill and hard work, and most important, his willingness to be unpopular in both Dorpat and St. Petersburg made him a very important factor in the university's success in its first decade" (Flynn 1965:130). So schreibt zusammenfassend der mit den Anfängen des zaristischen Bildungswesens beispielhaft vertraute Historiker James T. Flynn. Klingers Aufgabe war es, im baltischen Ostseeraum "das Schulwesen von der Spitze, der Dorpater Universität, bis zur Basis, den Elementarschulen, neu



aufzubauen oder zu reformieren, und ihm blieben dabei Erfolge nicht versagt" (Segeberg 1974:199). Die wichtigsten Bauvorhaben der Universität Dorpat etwa, darunter auch das heute noch sehenswerte Hauptgebäude, können unter seiner Kuratorschaft trotz erheblicher finanzieller Nöte verwirklicht werden (Rieger 1896:586–7). Auch im unmittelbaren Bereich von Forschung und Lehre ist Klingers Einfluß zu spüren. Besonderen Wert legt er auf die didaktische Kompetenz der Professoren. In einem Brief datiert vom 17. März 1804 heißt es: „Nach meiner Meinung ist die Gabe des Unterrichts die bedeutendste für die U[niversität], u mich dünkt, kein Mann von ächtem Sinn, kann einen Lehr Stuhl annehmen, u mit Gewissen Professor heißen, dem diese Gabe so fehlt, daß er ohne Frequenz bleibt. Die ersten Werke der Gelehrsamkeit dienen wohl zum Ruhm des Verfassers, sind nützlich für die gelehrte Welt, aber wenn ihr Verfasser ein unglücklicher Docent ist, was nutzt er den Studenten?" (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896:71).

Die vielschichtigen, ständig fluktuierenden Machtbalancen sowohl im Bereich der Universität Dorpat als auch im übrigen russischen Reich des jungen Zaren Alexander I. lassen Klinger allerdings nur selten einen ausreichend großen Entscheidungsspielraum. Er bleibt, trotz aller Erfolge, ein Außenseiter. Aber noch im Jahre 1808 gibt Klinger sich alles in allem mit dem zufrieden, was er für die Universität hat erreichen können. Als Kurator zeigt er sich voller Zuversicht, wenn er am 12. August 1808 an Wilhelm von Wolzogen schreibt: „Meine U[niversität] geht trefflich vorwärts." (ebd. 119). Mehr Schwierigkeiten hingegen bereitet Klinger sein Editionsvorhaben. 1806 berichtet er Georg Heinrich Ludwig Nicolovius, daß sein Verleger Hartknoch darauf verzichtet, seine *Werke* herauszugeben (ebd. 85). Er bittet deshalb Nicolovius bei der Suche um einen neuen geeigneten Verleger um Hilfe. Dessen Bruder, Friedrich Nicolovius, übernimmt schließlich die Aufgabe. Dennoch kommt es zu weiteren, z.T. erheblichen Verzögerungen. Klinger wird ungeduldig. Besorgt, ob der inzwischen auf 1809 vereinbarte Termin eingehalten werden kann, wendet er sich am 29. September 1808 wieder an Georg Heinrich Ludwig Nicolovius: „Heute wird nun abermals der Autor auftreten müssen, da Sie ihm in Ihrem letzten so viel u so schönen Stof gegeben haben. Um sich nun von ihm so schnell als

möglich zu befreuen, so vermögen Sie ja über Ihren Herrn Bruder, daß er für die Ankunft des Papiers Sorge, das heißt, daß er auf die Oster Messe von 1809 mit der ersten Lieferung nach Wort u Schrift, Wort halte. Auch zweifle ich nicht daran, u wir haben ja den ganzen Winter vor uns. Indessen da mich diese Anzeige etwas plagt, so sagen Sie mir gefälligst ein Wort des Trosts. Ich darf Ihnen wohl sagen, daß diese Sache und die versprochene Erscheinung zugleich, mir wichtig ist." (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896: 120).

Im Winter 1808 wird denn auch die Vorankündigung vorbereitet. Die ersten Bände der Werke-Edition sollen demnach, wie vereinbart, zur Ostermesse 1809 erscheinen. Im *Intelligenzblatt der Jenaischen Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* vom 1. März 1809 heißt es: „Fr. Max. Klingers Werke in 12 Bänden. Der Verfasser hat seine Schriften aufs neue revidirt, zum Theil umgearbeitet, und will, so wie sie sämmtlich nur von Einem Geiste belebt werden, auch in einer äußeren harmonischen Gestalt sie erscheinen lassen. Den Verlag dieser neuen Ausgabe hat er mir übertragen." (132). Unterzeichnet und datiert vom 28. Dezember 1808 ist das Inserat von Friedrich Nicolovius, Klingers neuem Verleger aus Königsberg. Noch vor Sommeranfang 1809 erhält Klinger Belegexemplare der drei ersten Bände seiner *Werke*-Edition. Unter ihnen befindet sich auch die lediglich geringfügig korrigierte und stilistisch kaum veränderte *Geschichte eines Teutschen*. Einzelheiten der Überlieferung sind:

F. M. KLINGERS/WERKE./ACHTER BAND./  
GESCHICHTE EINES TEUTSCHEN/DER NEUS-  
TEN ZEIT./KÖNIGSBERG/BEY FRIEDRICH NICO-  
LOVIUS. 1809./ Die Titelseiten der verschiedenen  
eingesehenen Exemplaren der Edition 1809 weisen  
Abweichungen auf. Vgl. Das Exemplar der Herzog  
August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (Sig.: Töpfer 201).<sup>3</sup>

1 Bl. Titel, S. [1]–382. 8° Satzspiegel: ca. 15,9 cm. × ca 8,2 cm. Antiqua. Vorlage: UB Tartu/Estland (Sig.: Kling. 1073).

<sup>3</sup> Die Titelseiten der verschiedenen eingesehenen Exemplaren der Edition 1809 weisen Abweichungen auf. Vgl. Das Exemplar der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (Sig.: Töpfer 201).

Obwohl ursprünglich die drei letzten Bände 1810 erscheinen sollten, kann Klinger das gesamte Editionsvorhaben erst 1816, etwa acht Jahre nach der ersten Lieferung abschließen. Mit diesem verspäteten Höhepunkt kommt seine schriftstellerische Tätigkeit zu einem Ende.

Das Jahr 1816 markiert insgesamt einen neuen Lebensabschnitt für Klinger. Ein zunehmend zurückgezogenes Dasein beginnt. Auch der Universität kehrt er den Rücken. Die Machtkämpfe motivieren ihn nicht mehr und die Resonanz auf sein Wirken als Kurator wird in Dorpat und in St. Peterburger ständig unfreundlicher. Für die Machtstärkeren war der etablierte Außenseiter derart "unbequem geworden" (Martini 1977:823), daß man ihn schließlich zum Rücktritt drängt. In einem Brief, datiert vom 28. Dezember 1816, heißt es erleichtert und verbittert zugleich: „Ich habe meine unterthänigste Bitte an Seine Kayserliche Majestät eingegeben, zu geruhen, mich (...) von der Curatel Dorpat und der Ober Schul Direction, gnädigst zu entlassen. Ich erwarte die Erfüllung meines sehnlichen Wunsches dieser Tage (...) wenn wir uns sehen, werden Sie überzeugt werden und bleiben, daß ich mir nichts vorzuwerfen habe — daß die verwegenen, verstokten u strafbaren Sünder in D[orpat]., an allem Schuld sind; daß — doch das Papier verträgt nicht, was ich sagen müßte." (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896:192).

Die Gründe für diesen schroffen Wandel sind neben politischen und wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten, denen sich Klinger und die Universität in zunehmenden Maße ausgesetzt sahen, auch in der mangelnden studentischen Disziplin und dem damit verbundenen Kontext zu suchen.

Daß Klinger — einmal abgesehen von den politischen Konsequenzen, die sich aus den verschiedenen Machtbalancen (Adel und Professoren; Universität Dorpat und Ministerien in St. Petersburg; Klinger und Ministerium für Volksbildung und Aufklärung; Studenten und Bürger; baltische Ritterschaft und Zar Alexander I. etc.) ergeben — Grund zur Sorge hatte, macht ein Blick auf eine Statistik deutlich. So wurden in der Zeitspanne von 1802–1827 zum Beispiel gegen jeden vierten Studenten Disziplinarverfahren eingeleitet (*Kaiserliche* 1827: vii). Dieser Aspekt ist an sich weniger für die Gesamtentwicklung der Universität wichtig; ihm



kommt jedoch insbesondere nach Einsetzen der Reaktion am Zarenhof, nach 1812, eine potentiell ausschlaggebende Bedeutung zu. Die Universität war in einer äußerst labilen Lage: neben grundlegenden internen Schwierigkeiten, sowie einer nahezu untragbar gewordenen finanziellen Belastung, schien die Universität zunehmend zwischen die Fronten der Interessen des Adels und der machtpolitischen, verstärkt religiös motivierten Bestrebungen des Zaren zu geraten (Salumets 1989b: 283–300). Der 'Schimpfklatzsch' nimmt zu (Smoljan 1962: 126–127). Der Kreis um Klinger wird kleiner.

Wie der *Dörptschen Zeitung* zu entnehmen ist, wird Klingers Entlassungsgesuch am 13. Januar 1817 stattgegeben. Auf der Titelseite der Sonntagsausgabe (21. Januar 1817) ist zu lesen: "Der Generall. Klinger ist, auf seine Bittschrift, von dem Posten eines Kurators der Universität zu Dorpat und deren Lehrbezirk Allernädigst entlassen" (*Dörptsche Zeitung* Jan. 1817).

Im kulturellen Gedächtnis der Esten und Deutschbalten spielt der Schriftsteller Klinger keine nennenswerte und der Kurator Klinger eine relativ geringe Rolle (zu den wenigen Veröffentlichungen in estnischer Sprache gehören: Samma 1972: 1560–1570, Oissar 1975: 60–70, Kudu 1975: 48–59). Dort, wo man sich an ihn erinnert, entsteht nicht selten der Eindruck, als sei aus dem brisanten Stürmer und Dränger ein sturer Zarendiener geworden (Bienemann 1902: 220). In diesem Zusammenhang wird z.B. gern darauf hingewiesen, daß Klinger dafür verantwortlich zeichnet, daß in Dorpat Theateraufführungen verboten wurden. Wie so oft, versperrt auch hier mangelnde Kenntnis des weiteren Kontextes den Blick auf eine sachgerechtere Einschätzung. Daß Klinger um der Universität willen zu dieser Maßnahme griff und sich überhaupt für die Zukunft der Universität in relativ schwierigen Zeiten (napoleonische Kriege, reaktionärer innenpolitischer Kurs, Inflation, Promotionsskandal) einsetzte ist deshalb in Vergessenheit geraten (Salumets 1989a: 219–233). Auch aus diesen Gründen überrascht es nicht, daß die "erste Blütezeit" der Universität Dorpat nicht mit Klinger, sondern mit dessen Nachfolger, dem Generalleutnant a.D. Graf Karl Lieven, verbunden wird (Seesemann 1987: 357).

## 5. Nachbemerkung: der "andere Klassiker"

Der in erster Linie persönliche schriftstellerische Erfolg, den der Abschluß der Edition seiner *Werke* darstellt, mag den bei seinem Rücktritt vom Amt des Kurators fast 60-jährigen Dichter-General versöhnlich gestimmt haben. Sicherlich nicht ohne Stolz schreibt Klinger am 9. Dezember 1817 aus St. Petersburg an seinen Jugendfreund Goethe nach Weimar: „Dem Buchhändler Nicolovius in Koenigsb: hatte ich aufgetragen, Ihnen die letzte Lieferung meiner Schriften zu überschicken.“ (Rieger *Briefbuch* 1896: 196). Ob dies aus alter Verbundenheit geschah oder ob Klinger zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch immer mit Goethe im Wettstreit lag, muß offen bleiben. Daß er mit der *Geschichte eines Deutschen* "in einer", wie es Klingers wichtigster Biograph und Großneffe formulierte, "stillschweigenden aber schwerlich unbewußten Concurrenz mit Goethe die sittliche Ausbildung eines Deutschen der neuesten Zeit vorführte", ist mit ziemlicher Sicherheit anzunehmen (Rieger 1896: 355).

Freilich war die Entscheidung längst gefallen. Schon 1820 zählte Klinger nur bei wenigen, wie etwa Karl Morgenstern, mit zu den "deutschen Classikern" (Selbmann 1988: 97). Für die Mehrzahl gehört er jedoch zu solchen Autoren wie z. B. Wilhelm Busch, Karl May und Adolph Knigge — d.h. zu den "andere[n] Klassiker[n]" (Ueding 1986). Zwar ist er als Stürmer und Dränger sicherlich keine Randfigur, aber selbst sein Jugenddrama, *Sturm und Drang*, wird, trotz des epochemachenden Titels, als "weithin unbekanntes Stück" bezeichnet (Stellmacher 1983: 140).

Der Weimarer Dichter-Fürst hätte dieser Einstufung Klingers als "anderen Klassiker" wohl zugestimmt. Im Zusammenhang mit Klingers Roman *Giafar der Barmecide* schreibt er am 8. Juli 1795 aus Karlsbad an Schiller: „Als berühmter Schriftsteller bin ich übrigens recht gut aufgenommen worden, wobei es doch nicht an Demütigungen gefehlt hat. Z.B. sagte mir ein allerliebstes Weibchen: sie habe meine letzten Schriften mit dem größten Vergnügen gelesen, besonders habe sie Giaffar der Barmecide über alle Maßen interessiert.“ (Mandelkow 1988: 198). Aussagen dieser Art sind Klingers kulturellem 'Kapital' freilich nicht zugute gekommen. Gefestigt haben sie vielmehr seinen Status als

etablierten Außenseiter; vor allem in seiner Heimat — dort, wo es dem Dichter-General ein besonderes Bedürfnis war, anerkannt zu werden. In Vergessenheit ist er allerdings nie geraten. Allein die Regelmäßigkeit, mit der Literaturkritiker glauben, daran erinnern zu müssen, daß Klinger in der Geschichte des deutschen Dramas, Theaters und Romans nahezu "ohne Folgen geblieben" und mit der Mehrzahl seiner Schriften ein unbekannter Autor geworden" sei, wirkt dem entgegen. Der Autor der *Geschichte eines Teutschen* ist weder bekannt noch unbekannt. Er bleibt vielmehr ein etablierter Außenseiter.

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## Das estnisch-deutsche literarische Spannungsfeld um die Jahrhundertwende

LIINA LUKAS

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Seit dem 13. Jahrhundert ist die Geistesgeschichte Estlands (sowie des ganzen Baltikums) im engen Zusammenhang mit der deutschen Kulturgeschichte verlaufen. Sie ist bis zum 19. Jahrhundert ein Teil der deutschen sowie der estnischen Kulturgeschichte gewesen. Dabei spielte die **deutschbaltische Kultur** eine Vermittlerrolle. Aus deutscher Sicht ist sie eine Regionalkultur gewesen, eine Grenzkultur, die, in die deutsche Kultur integriert, aber doch von der Kultur des Mutterlandes abgetrennt, ständig mit der Notwendigkeit konfrontiert war, ihre Identität in Beziehung zu den sie umgebenden fremden Kulturen (russische und estnische bzw lettische) zu bestimmen. Das prägte ihre Eigenart im Laufe der Jahrhunderte. Aus estnischer Sicht handelt es sich hingegen um eine Kolonialkultur, die von einigen Phänomänen des Kolonialbewusstseins getragen ist (Orientiertheit an der Hochkultur des Mutterlandes, Rechtfertigung des deutschen Kolonialismus mit der Idee des Kulturträgertums und dem Schutzbedürfnis der einheimischen wilden Nation, christliches Sendungsbewusstsein, Lebensraum-Ideologie, "Vorposten"-Apologie des Deutschtums, Herrenmenschen-Ideologie usw). Die beiden Kulturen (die estnische und die deutschbaltische) erhoben auf ein und denselben Heimat-Begriff (auch Heimatliteratur, Heimatkunde) Anspruch.

Die doppelte Zugehörigkeit der Geistesgeschichte Estlands hat zur Folge, dass in der Geschichtsschreibung Estlands bis heute noch zwei gegensätzliche Paradigmen parallel existieren — das estnische und das deutschbaltische (siehe Undusk: 2000). Dasselbe

gilt auch für die Literaturgeschichtsschreibung. In der estnischen Literaturgeschichte sind nur die estnischsprachigen Texte der deutschen Autoren berücksichtigt worden. Nur selten stösst man auf die Meinung, dass der Versuch, den Entwicklungsprozess der estnischen Literatur ohne Berücksichtigung ihres deutschbaltischen kulturellen Kontextes zu behandeln, unvollständig ist (die Notwendigkeit einer parallelen oder vergleichenden Untersuchung haben vor allem Jaan Undusk, Otto A. Webermann, Maie Kalda und Aarne Vinkel betont. Die einzige umfangreiche vergleichende Darstellung der Literaturen des Baltikums ist die Monographie von Friedrich Scholz — *Die Literaturen des Baltikums*, 1990).

Jedoch ist klar, dass bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts die historische Zweisprachigkeit des Baltikums keine Existenz von zwei unterschiedlichen Literaturen bedeutete: die estnischsprachige (schriftliche) Literatur war eher eine "Fortsetzung" der deutschen Literatur in estnischer Sprache (Undusk 1992), war oft von Deutschen verfasst und folgte also unmittelbar dem deutschen Vorbild. Die hiesigen estnischen und deutschen Texte gehörten zusammen, waren eigentlich die Ausprägungen **einer** Literatur in den verschiedenen Sprachen und in unterschiedlichem Stil, abhängig u.a. auch davon, welchen Leser sie gerade im Blick hatten.

Im Folgenden wird bei der Konstruktion eines **literarischen Feldes** anstelle des sprachlich-nationalen Prinzips das geographisch-kulturelle gewählt und die zweisprachige Literatur und das literarische Leben der damaligen baltischen Provinzen Russlands als die Ausprägungen des einen einheitlichen literarischen Feldes angesehen. Der Begriff des literarischen Feldes wird als "sinnliches Konstrukt" im Sinne Bourdieus angewendet (Bourdieu 1997a, 1997b, 1999), als **Raum der möglichen Positionen und aktuellen und potentiellen künstlerischen Positionierungen in der Literatur** und im literarischen Leben (Bourdieu 1999: 309), als Ort der dynamischen Prozesse, an dem die Vertreter der gegensätzlichen Positionen um die Legitimität der konkurrierenden Literaturdefinitionen kämpfen, indem sie entweder die bestehende Ordnung konservieren möchten (d.h. die orthodoxen Standpunkte vertreten) oder zum häretischen Bruch, zur Kritik an bestehenden Formen, zum Sturz der geltenden Vorbilder tendieren (ib. 329).



Bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts fiel die Grenze zwischen den oppositionellen Positionen und Positionierungen des Feldes nicht unbedingt mit der nationalen oder sprachlichen Grenze zusammen. Entscheidender als nationale Zugehörigkeit waren die gemeinsame Bildungssprache, das kulturelle und symbolische Kapital, gemeinsame mentale Gewohnheiten oder das gemeinsame System "verinnerlichter Handlungs- und Denkmuster" (habitus): Der Este Friedrich Robert Faehlmann schrieb seine *Estnischen Mythen* (1840–52) auf Deutsch, der Deutsche Georg Julius von Schultze-Bertram verfasste sein Epos *Ilmatar* (1871) auf Estnisch, Heinrich Neus übersetzte estnische Volkslieder und veröffentlichte sie in der Zeitung *Das Inland* (1836–63), die zum gemeinsamen Forum der Literaten beider Herkunft wurde; das Nationalepos der Esten, *Kalevipoeg* (1857–61) erschien parallel auf Estnisch und Deutsch. Selbstverständlich war die Teilnahme der deutschen und estnischen Literaten an den gemeinsamen Aktivitäten und Institutionen (Estnische Gelehrte Gesellschaft).

Mit dem wachsenden Selbstbewusstsein der estnischen Kultur wurde die Differenz zwischen den verschiedenen Positionen zunehmend vom nationalen Prinzip bestimmt, so dass sich estnische und deutsche Positionen um die Jahrhundertwende klar gegenseitig abzeichneten. Dabei übernimmt die estnische Literatur immer mehr die häretischen Positionen, versucht sich durch die Ablehnung der bestehenden Formen und Vorbilder zu legitimieren, während die deutschbaltische Literatur die tradierte symbolische Ordnung verteidigt. Dieser Kampf führt um die Jahrhundertwende zum Wechsel der kulturellen Dominante im Baltikum, in deren Folge die deutschen Positionen immer mehr in die Peripherie gedrängt und die estnischen (bzw die lettischen) das literarische Feld dominieren werden.

Im Weiteren wäre zu fragen, welche die dominierende Ordnung des literarischen Feldes am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts war, gegen die neue Positionen sich artikulieren werden?

Bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts ist die deutschsprachige Literatur des Baltikums ein Bestandteil der deutschen Literatur gewesen und verfügte über kein eigenes Bewusstsein als spezifisch deutschbaltische Literatur, hatte eine deutsche, nicht baltische Identität. Der hiesige Literat blickte immer zum Mutterland, bevor

er die Feder ansetzte und beteiligte sich am Geistesleben, insofern er sich in Deutschland bemerkbar machen konnte. Im Laufe des 19. Jahrhunderts findet ein Emanzipationssprozess der deutsch-baltischen Kultur statt, entwickelt sich ein Identitätsbewusstsein — nun mehr baltisch als deutsch —, das auf das langfristige politische Abgeschnittensein vom Mutterland, aber auch auf die Entstehung der einheimischen höheren Bildungsstätte (Universität Tartu) zurückzuführen ist. Das Identitätsgefühl äusserte sich auch im Literaturleben. Es entwickelte sich **ein eigenes literarisches Feld**, mit eigenen **Legitimationsinstanzen** wie baltische Zeitschriften, Anthologien, baltische Literaturgeschichten und Literaturkritik; nicht zuletzt mit den spezifisch baltischen Themen in der Literatur. “Kaum eine andere Landschaft von gleich beschränktem Umfang hat während der letzten Jahre so häufig in den Spiegel gesehen, ihr eigenes Wesen so unaufhörlich kritisiert, auf die eigene Objektivierung so viele Mühe verwendet, wie die unsrige”, schreibt ein Kritiker über die vorherrschende Tendenz der baltischen Romanliteratur in den 1880er Jahren (BM 1881 XXVIII: 96).

Eine Belebung des Literaturlebens und der Publizistik nimmt eigentlich in den 1860er Jahren ihren Anfang: die einheimischen Zeitungen wie *Revalsche Zeitung* und *Dorpater Tageblatt* werden ins Leben gerufen, die *Rigische Zeitung* wird umgestaltet, im Herbst 1859 erscheint die erste Nummer der *Baltischen Monatschrift*, die bis in die ersten Jahrzehnte des 20. Jahrhunderts hinein das bedeutendste Forum des deutschen Kulturlebens bleibt — auch im Bereich der Literaturgeschichte und -kritik. 1894, mit dem von Jeannot Emil Freiherr von Grothuss herausgegebenen *Baltischen Dichterbuch* erscheint eine erste umfangreiche baltische Literaturgeschichte.

In der Literatur tauchen die baltischen Themen auf. Schon seit 1852 veröffentlichte Georg Julius von Schultz-Bertram seine amüsanten *Baltischen Skizzen*. Nun kommen die *Lebensbilder aus der baltischen Heimat* von Johanna Conradi (1861) hinzu. In ihrem Roman *Georg Stein oder Deutsche und Letten* (1864) werden soziale Beziehungen des Landes behandelt — ein ganz neues Thema in der baltischen Literatur. Auf dem estnischen Gebiet beginnen Nikolai Graf Reh binder und Georg Julius von Schultz-

Bertram mit den Dorfgeschichten. In den 1880er Jahren wendet sich die baltische Romanliteratur entschieden der baltischen Geschichte zu, was einerseits natürlich durch den allgemeinen Erfolg des historischen Romans in der europäischen Literatur der II Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts (Walter Scott), unter anderem auch in der deutschen (Felix Dahn, Georg Ebers, Gustav Freytag u.a.), zu erklären ist. Andererseits ist das Interesse für die eigene baltische Geschichte auch durch die zunehmenden Identitätssuchen bedingt. *Bandomire* von Heinrich Laube, *Ein Schwedekind. Ein baltischer Roman aus der Zeit Herzog Jacobs von Kurland* von Ernst Dorn (1879), vor allem aber *Die von Kelles* von T. H. Pantenius (1885) sind die berühmtesten Romane, die das Verhängnis der Deutschen im Wirbelwind der baltischen Geschichte thematisieren. Die "Heimatkunst-Bewegung", die in Deutschland in den 1890er Jahren aufblühte (Leiß, Stadler 1997: 67), gestaltete baltische Literatur schon ein Jahrzehnt früher, nahm auf dem literarischen Feld eine dominierende Position ein und blieb bis zum Ende der deutschbaltischen Literatur bestehen. Den erfolgreichsten Beitrag in dieser Gattung hat Theodor Hermann Pantenius geleistet.

Eine Erscheinungsform der Heimatkunst-Bewegung ist auch die Bauernepik, die aus dem Schloss- oder Pastoratfenster herausblickend niedergeschrieben wurde. Die bekanntesten Beispiele sind zwar die unter dem Namen von Ernst Klinge (Elise von Keyserling) veröffentlichten *Kurischen Volksgeschichten* (1883) oder Pantenius' Bauernnovellen. Dass die Gattung noch im 20. Jahrhundert unter den deutschbaltischen Dichtern beliebt war, beweisen die zahlreichen Dorfgeschichten von Peter Zoege von Mannteuffel (*Das estnische Bauernbuch. Nordische Dorfgeschichten*, 1925; *Die Brandung. Eine estnische Novelle*, 1925; *Die Tochter des Geizhalses. Estnische Dorfgeschichte*, 1927).

Angeichts der Beliebtheit der historischen Erzählungen unter den deutschbaltischen Autoren ist es kein Wunder, dass auch die estnische Literatur ihren eigenen Weg gerade in dieser Gattung zu gehen versucht — nur die Perspektive ist genau umgekehrt. Die Idealisierung und Ideologisierung in diesen Texten bleibt nicht unbemerkt. Vielleicht fügen die estnischen Autoren ihren historischen Geschichten etwas mehr romantisches Pathos hinzu,



während die deutschbaltischen historischen Romane eher in der beinahe fünfzigjährigen Tradition des bürgerlichen Realismus der deutschen Literatur wurzeln.

Der Positionskampf wird noch deutlicher auf der Metaebene geführt. Einen Eindruck vom ästhetischen und ideologischen Geschmack vermittelt die repräsentativste Zeitschrift dieser Epoche — die *Baltische Monatsschrift* (1859–1912), die neben wirtschaftlichen, politischen, historischen oder Tagesthemen auch literaturtheoretische und -historische Beiträge sowie aktuelle Literaturkritik veröffentlicht (in den Rubriken “Neue Belletristik”, “Litterarische Streiflichter” oder “Litterarische Umschau”). Die wichtigsten Autoren, die literaturtheoretische oder ästhetische Fragen behandeln, sind der Tartuer Professor Woldemar Masing, Gregor von Glasenapp, Eduard Eckhardt, Theodor Pezold; die neueste Literatur wird vor allem von Leopold von Schroeder vermittelt — von einem aus Tartu gebürtigen Mann, der sich als Altphilologe, Indologe und Religionshistoriker in Europa einen Namen gemacht hatte und seit 1899 an der Universität Wien arbeitete.

Charakteristisch für die Literaturkritik in der *Baltischen Monatsschrift* ist das tiefe Wurzeln im Geist des deutschen klassischen Idealismus, das Festhalten an den Idealen der Epoche von Goethe und Schiller und eine skeptische Haltung gegenüber allem, was von diesem Geist abweicht. Vielleicht äussert sich die deutschbaltische Identitätsproblematik im Bedürfnis, unbedingt am Kern des deutschen Geistesleben festzuhalten. Im berühmten Spruch der Deutschbalten “*Es bleibe beim Alten*” artikuliert sich der Wunsch, keine für die Identität gefährliche, den festen Boden erschütternden kulturellen Einflüsse zuzulassen, egal, woher sie auch kommen, aus dem fernen Mutterland oder aus der nächsten Nachbarschaft (Skandinavien, Russland).

Nur einige seltene Stimmen klagen dabei über die Isoliertheit und den Mangel an Kontakten mit westlichen Geistesströmungen (BM 1885 XXXII: 612).

In der Auseinandersetzung um die Moderne, die um 1880 aufbricht, nimmt die deutschbaltische Literaturkritik orthodoxe Positionen an. Die Bezeichnung “moderne Literatur” (die auch die naturalistische Strömung miteinschliesst) taucht in der deutsch-

baltischen Literatur meistens in einer negativen Konnotation auf. „Es ist für einen Menschen, der in den Idealen Goethes und Schillers, Homers und Shakespeares aufgewachsen ist, eine wenig erfreuliche Aufgabe, Erscheinungen der neueren sogenannten „schönen“ Litteratur zu lesen oder gar zu besprechen; einer Litteratur, in welcher Nietzsche und Ibsen als die allbewunderten, verehrten Heroen dastehen, als Apostel einer neuen, angeblich grossen Zeit, vor denen sich fast Alles in Ehrfurcht verneigt“, klagt Leopold von Schroeder über seine schwere Aufgabe der Besprechung moderner Literatur (BM 1898 XLV: 168).

Nietzsche als primum motor der verschiedenen „Modernismen“ des Jahrhundertendes und der Jahrhundertwende wird in der „Baltischen Monatschrift“ oft und unterschiedlich rezipiert. Gregor von Glasenapp, der eine umfangreiche vergleichende Darstellung von Nietzsche und Tolstoi durch mehrere Nummern der Monatsschrift anbietet, gesteht ihm „in manchen wichtigen Einzelheiten einen bleibenden Werth“ zu (BM 1894: 473). Doch wird im allgemeinen Tolstoi als „der grosse Dichter, gewaltige Seelenkündiger, edle Mensch, der mit tiefem Ernst, mit unbeugsamer Energie nach den höchsten Zielen der Wahrheit, der Liebe, der moralischen Reinheit strebt“ (Schroeder, BM XLIX 1900: 285) ihm vorgezogen, und Nietzsches „Umwertung aller Werte“ für die „thörischste und verrückteste Idee, die im Verlaufe der ganzen Menschheitsentwicklung aus einem Menschenhirn entsprungen ist“, erklärt (ib. 258).

Die erste modernistische Strömung — Naturalismus — wird einhellig von den Autoren der Baltischen Monatschrift abgelehnt. Er sei nicht geeignet für den deutschen Geist, finden Schroeder und auch Woldemar Masing, der mehrmals in seinen ästhetischen Aufsätzen auf dieses Thema kommt. Der letztere gibt das naturalistische Prinzip in der Kunst zu — als Erweiterer des Kunstbegriffs und Entdecker der neuen Themen und technischen Mittel —, doch soll seiner Meinung nach dieses Prinzip dem idealistischen untergeordnet sein. Der moderne Naturalismus würde nicht dem Ziele der Kunst dienen. Im Jahre 1896, nach der Blütezeit des Naturalismus, scheint seine Naturalismuskritik etwas milder. Er gesteht den immensen Einfluss des Naturalismus für die Literatur und Kunst, bildet in der vergleichenden Analyse der

Werke von Zola, Ibsen und Tolstoi seine Naturalismustypologie aus und zieht den Tolstoischen "ethischen" Naturalismus dem der anderen vor.

Viel heftiger gegen den Naturalismus kämpft Schroeder. "Hässlichkeits-Entusiasmus", "lächerliche Originalitätshascherei" nennt Schroeder die Bestrebungen der moderner Literatur (BM 1898 XLV: 170) "Der deutsche ist nur dann gross, wenn er — wie Goethe, Schiller, Grillparzer — dem ihm tief innewohnenden, grossen Zuge zum Idealismus folgt. Verleugnet er diesen, dann verleugnet er sich selbst und verurteilt sich zu einer Rolle zweiten oder dritten Ranges. In naturalistischen Schöpfungen werden die Deutschen stets von Französen, Russen, Norwegern weit übertroffen werden, einfach aus dem Grunde, weil diese Nationen nach der realistischen Seite weit stärker begabt, weit reicher verlangt sind.... Und nun scheint es, als wolle das besiegte und degemüthigte Frankreich die Deutschen noch in anderer Weise beschämen. Wie klein, wie leer, wie öde, wie arm und elend nimmt sich Hauptmanns "Fuhrmann Henschel" neben Edmond Rostands "Cyrano de Bergerac" aus!" (Schroeder, BM 1899 XLVII: 225–226).

Besonders ablehnend ist Schroeder gegenüber Ibsen, der "kein echter, ursprünglicher Dichter, sondern ein Mann der Grübeleien, der logischen und psychologischen Konstruktionen", sei, der "lediglich Zerrbilder" (BM 1900 XLIX: 288) bietet. Seine Epigonen Hauptmann und Sudermann hätten das deutsche Drama in durchaus falsche Bahnen gelenkt (Schroeder, BM 1899 XLVII: 225). Hauptmanns Stücke seien "hervorragend schaaale und witzlose, rohe und widerwärtige Produkte" (BM 1900 XLIX: 290), die "nur Ekel und Langeweile erregen" (ib. 291). "Welchen Grad die Hypnose erreicht hat, in welche die Mitwelt durch die Moderne versetzt ist, dass lässt sich an Hauptmann nicht mindern deutlich wie an Ibsen studieren. Doch solche Zustände pflegen einmal ihr Ende zu erreichen", hofft Schroeder (ib. 291). Auch Arno Holz und Richard Dehmel werden abgelehnt.

Genau so negativ verhält sich der Kritiker gegenüber dem "oft so verstiegenen, oft so verschwommenen Symbolismus", der ihm "herzlich öde und langweilig" geworden ist (Schroeder, BM 1900 XLIX: 289). Schwach und ungesund sei die moderne Literatur, die



“mit den grossen Dichtern der Vergangenheit einen Vergleich durchaus nicht aushalten” kann. Der aufmerksame Beobachter spüre aber “aus dem ganzen vielgepriesenen Prozess der neueren Literatur-Entwicklung deutlich den Verwesungsgeruch sich entgegenwehen...” (BM 1898 XLV: 169).

Was empfiehlt der baltische Kritiker dem baltischen Leser? Freilich eine solche Art der Literatur, wo “jener echt deutsche Idealismus” herrsche, “ohne den die deutsche Dichtung auf die Dauer doch nicht auskommt, nicht leben kann, allen Modetheorien und Moderorheiten zum Trotz” (Schroeder, BM 1902 LIII: 420). Der Kritiker empfiehlt die warmherzigen, im Stil von Raabe geschriebenen Romane von Clara Viebig, die Dorfgeschichte des Norwegers Björnsterne Björson, des Dänen Zacharias Nielsen, die historischen Romane von Felix Dahn, die kulturgeschichtlichen Erzählungen von Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl und mehrerer heute ganz vergessener Autoren der deutschen “Heimatkunst-Bewegung”. Zur Pflichtlektüre der Balten gehört selbstverständlich Tolstoi. Grosse Freude hat der baltische Kritiker über die baltischen Autoren, die zum Glück “unberührt von dem Einfluss der modernen Hässlichkeits-Enthusiasten, ganz frei von ihrer unsinnigen und lächerlichen Originalitätshascherei” geliebt sind und “von der ewigen Schönheit singen” (BM 1898 XLV: 170). So rühmt Schroeder die “klassischen Novellen” von Theodor Hermann Pantenius und die baltische Gegenwart behandelnden Romane von Carl Worms, die Naturlyrik von Carl Hunnius, den er für den besten Lyriker der Gegenwart hält (1898 XLV: 170) und der “nichts mit der Moderne gemein” habe, im Gegenteil, der ihm fast wie ein Bürger vergangener Zeiten erscheine (ib. 172). Vom Dichterwerk Maurice von Sterns schätzt der Kritiker ausnahmslos nur diesen Teil, der nicht von der Moderne beeinflusst ist und empfiehlt dem Dichter, sich ganz von der Moderne und ihrem Geschmack loszusagen (ib. 174).

Aus dem oben Angeführten ergibt sich, dass die baltische Literaturkritik sich eher konservativ zu den modernen Strömungen und Sinngehalten verhält und damit vorwiegend orthodoxe Positionen auf dem literarischen Feld einnimmt. Dasselbe gilt auch für die baltische Dichtung der Jahrhundertwende, die in der Lyrik im allgemeinen die deutsche klassisch-romantische Tradition

verfolgt. In der Prosa geht es um die Darstellung des eigenen Lebensdramas und um das Behaupten der eigenen Lebensordnung, was in den zu Stereotypen neigenden Bildern, im erzählerischen Ton, in einer künstlerisch anspruchslosen, aber ideologisch einmütigen realistischen Prosa deutlich wird.

Doch gibt es Autoren, die vom main-stream der deutsch-baltischen Literatur abweichen und die "Sprünge zur Moderne" machen. Einer von ihnen ist **Eduard von Keyserling** (1855–1918), der in den literarischen Zentren der Moderne wie Wien und München tätig und mit Peter Altenberg, Stefan George, Max Halbe, Frank Wedekind, Alfred Kubin, Rudolf Kassner, Lovis Corinth u.a. befreundet war. Seine ersten, in Wien niedergeschriebenen Romane *Fräulein Rosa Herz* (1887) und *Die dritte Stiege* (1892) sind vom Naturalismus beeinflusst. Im Jahre 1903 entsteht der Roman *Beate und Mareile*, der einen ästhetischen Wandel anzeigt. Seitdem spiegeln seine Erzählungen und Romane das epochenspezifische Krisenbewusstsein und den Kulturpessimismus wider und verknüpfen sich mit den ästhetischen Diskursen der Dekadenz und des Ästhetizismus. Seine (baltischen) Schlossgeschichten setzen ein durchaus vom modernen Lebens- (pro Verfalls-)gefühl getragenes Denkmal für diese anakronistisch gewordene Welt und Lebensform, der der Autor entstammt.

Dass das baltische kulturelle Kapital einen andersartigen Entwicklungsgang ermöglicht hat, beweist auch **Maurice von Stern** (1860–1938). Gebürtiger Adliger aus Tallinn, ausgebildet in Tartu und im russischen Militär gedient, arbeitete Stern in den 1870er Jahren in der Redaktion der Revalschen Zeitung, verließ dann plötzlich das Heimatland und reiste nach Amerika, wo er als einfacher Arbeiter begann und die Proletarierzeitung *New-Jersey-Arbeiter-Zeitung* herausgab. Nach Europa zurückgekehrt, gründete Stern in Zürich die Zeitschrift *Sterns literarisches Bulletin der Schweiz*. Später lebte der Dichter in Österreich (Linz). In Amerika veröffentlichte Stern seinen ersten Gedichtband, der für einen baltischen Adelssprössling den überraschenden Titel *Proletarier-Lieder* (1885) trug.

Ich kenn' den Reichtum, hab' ihn selbst genossen, —  
 Dass dem so ist, thut mir von Herzen leid;  
 Ich selber bin der reichen Brut entsprossen,  
 Doch Armut lehrte mich — Gerechtigkeit,

So sagt Stern sich los von seiner aristokratischen Herkunft, was gleichzeitig das Lossagen von den Konventionen der Vergangenheit (darunter auch der Literaturtradition) bedeutet. Stattdessen will der Dichter sich neuen Ruhm in der neuer Zeit erkämpfen:

Wir trauern nicht und schmachten nicht wie Werther,  
 Wir seufzen nicht nach der Vergangenheit, —  
 Wir kämpfen unsre Fäuste um die Schwerter  
 Und lechzen nach dem Ruhme unsrer Zeit.  
 Wir tragen unser Techt auf Schwertespitze  
 Und Wunden schlagen: nennt sich unsre Pflicht.

Sterns Kampf ist jedoch keine Rebellion gegen die tradierten Formen bzw. für neue Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten in der Dichtung. Obwohl einige Gedichte wirklich impressionistische Farben im modernen Sekundenstil oder symbolistische Bilder beeinhalteten, steht seine Dichtung doch in der Tradition der Spätromantik oder des Vormärz (Lenau, Heine). Stern trägt in der Dichtung denselben Kampf aus, zu dem auch seine "Reformschriften" aufrufen (z.B. *Die Selbsterziehung als Grundlage der sozialen Reform*, Leipzig 1904). Seinen sozialdemokratischen Programmen ist er jedoch nicht treu geblieben. So wechseln sich in seinen Bänden die Revolutionslieder mit den Apologien an dem Kaiser der k.u.k. Monarchie ab. Der spätere Stern neigt der religiösen Mystik zu, sucht in seinen philosophischen Schriften philosophische Erkenntnis und Religion zu versöhnen, stellt sich gegen den modernen Ich-Kult und fordert eine pantheistische Verschmelzung des Individuums mit der Allheit. Die moderne Haltlosigkeit und Gegensätzlichkeit verrät sein einziger autobiographischer Roman *Walter Wendrich* (1895), in dem der Dichter seine Flucht aus der engen Luft Estlands begründet, in der er nie zur freien Entfaltung seines Wesens komme. Sterns Amerika-Erfahrung in ihrer träumerischen absurden Abenteuerlichkeit durch alle möglichen Orte, Gesellschaftsschichten, Berufe greift teilweise der von Kafka vor.



Die baltische Literaturkritik hat den Verstoss seiner berühmtesten Söhne gegen die baltischen Literaturkonventionen nicht toleriert. In Sterns Werk, wie oben gezeigt, wurde nur der Teil akzeptiert, der von der Moderne unberührt bleibt (lehnausche Weltschmerzdicthung oder poetische Beschreibungen der vaterländischen Landschaft). Keyserling, dessen Beziehungen zur baltischen Gesellschaft sowieso problematisch waren, wurde zuerst ganz verschwiegen. Beide spürten die Notwendigkeit, aus der baltischen konservativen Atmosphäre zu flüchten, um vom Hauptweg der baltischen Literatur abzubiegen. Das baltische kulturelle Kapital konnte seine Positionen nur bewahren, die von aussen importierten Dispositionen Keyserlings oder Sterns haben nicht ausgereicht, um das System der Positionen auf dem literarischen Feld zu verändern.

Dieses Neue, das als strukturelle Lücken auf jedem Feld vorhanden ist, wurde zunehmend von der estnischen Literatur besetzt. Die estnische Literatur, die sich unter dem starken Einfluß der deutschbaltischen Literatur entfaltete und bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts dem Muster der drittclassigen deutschen Autoren folgte, formt am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts ihre Identität unter radikaler Ablehnung der deutschbaltischen Kultur aus. Sie entwickelte sich zu einem **Gegen-Feld**, das sich von dem dominanten deutschen Feld absetzen und sich in der Opposition zu ihm legitimieren wollte. Im Jahre 1909 hielt ein estnischer moderner Dichter, Jaan Oks, den Kampf gegen die kleinbürgerlichen deutschen Einflüsse für den einzigen Weg, der die Esten der Kultur an sich näher bringt (Oks 1909: 278).

Begreiflicherweise fängt die deutschbaltische Seite an, die Emanzipationsversuche der rebellischen Tochter zu ignorieren. Nicht die estnisch- oder lettischsprachige Literatur an sich, sondern ihr häretischer Charakter wird abgelehnt. Ein Tartuer Journalist, Arthur Usthal, behauptet im Jahre 1911 in der Zeitschrift *Das literarische Echo*, "dass es eine moderne estnische Originalliteratur in des Wortes eigenster Bedeutung noch überhaupt nicht gibt. /---/ Es fehlen nicht nur bemerkenswerte dichterische Talente, sondern es fehlt vor allem auch der entsprechende Literaturboden" (Usthal 1911/12: 200–204). Eine solche Behauptung in der Blütezeit der modernen literarischen Bewegung "Jung-

Estlands", die ihre Vorbilder weitgehend in der französischen oder in den skandinavischen Literatur(en) fand und eine hohe künstlerische Qualität in die estnische Literatur gebracht hatte, ist durchaus inkompetent oder tendenziös. Usthal wirft den Jung-Esten vor, dass sie von der "Armut des baltischdeutschen Geistes" (Juhan Luiga, Bernhard Linde) sprechen und "sich als Adepten der von Fäulniskeimen durchsetzten Literatur des second empire gefallen" hatten (Usthal 1911/12: 202). Die Dichtung der Jung-Esten sei eine papierene Literatenkunst, die übermässig fremde Götter verehrte und dem Volk nichts zu sagen habe (ib. 202).

Erinnern wir uns, dass die baltische Kritik auch der modernen deutschen Literatur eine Entfernung vom eigentlichen deutschen Wesen vorgeworfen hat und jede moderne Erscheinung in dieser entschieden ablehnte. So wie Keyserling und Stern, sollten auch die estnischen jungen Dichter **Eduard Vilde**, **Gustav Suits**, **Friedebert Tuglas**, **Anton Hansen Tammsaare** u.a. den Modernismus im Ausland entdecken. Das baltische kulturelle Kapital müsste "konvertiert" werden. Eduard Vilde beginnt damit und schärfte seine Kenntnisse am Naturalismus in Berlin.

Es ist ja sogar erwartungsgemäss, dass gerade der Naturalismus mit seiner sozialkritischen Stimmung und mit seiner Affinität zu den Themen der niedrigen Gesellschaftsschichten sich als erste moderne Literaturbewegung in der estnischen Literatur durchsetzen konnte. Für die Wahrnehmung der anderen literarischen Diskurse der Jahrhundertwende fehlte noch der soziokulturelle Kontext. Die moderne Lebenshaltung als Voraussetzung der neuen Literaturerscheinungen, durch bestimmte soziokulturelle Bedingungen (Urbanisierung, Zusammenbruch des Weltbildes des Bildungsbürgertums, Kulturpessimismus usw; Rasch 1986) entstanden, war in den Agrarverhältnissen der baltischen Provinzen Russlands unvorstellbar. "Intelligente Stadtkultur" war bei uns erst in der Bildungsphase, "der Geist der Stadt" erst im Eindringen, wie Friedebert Tuglas damals bemerkte (Tuglas 1996: 454). Um mit den modernen Strömungen der europäischen Literatur Schritt zu halten, müsste man sich diese "Stadt der modernen Zeit" einbilden oder entlehnen. So schreibt Tuglas in seinem Essay "Der literarische Stil" im Jahre 1912: "Da es bei uns keine Grossstädte gibt, haben wir uns die kulturellen Stimmungen der

Stadt und grosser Welt eigentlich zu theoretisch, indirekt, durch Bildung, durch fremde Literatur und Kunst angeeignet. Wir haben uns bisher am Schaffen der europäischen Kunstwerte nicht beteiligen können. Nichts verbindet uns mit der Geschichte dieser Werte. Wir sind theoretische Europäer. Es gibt ein neues abstraktes Lebensgefühl, aber keine entsprechenden Äusserungen im wirklichen Leben. /---/ Es entwickelt sich eine Verfeinerung, eine Europäisierung der Empfindungen und Begriffe, aber das Leben, das diesen Empfindungen und Begriffen entsprechen und damit zeitgemässen literarischen Stoff und literarische Sprache anbieten würde, ist nicht so weit entwickelt" (Tuglas 1996: 52).

So hatten sie das neue Sinnsystem, wozu sie sich verpflichtet gefühlt haben, programmgemäss importiert: "Die Ursache der Entstehung der neuen literarischen Strömung ist am natürlichsten in der Literatur der anderen Völker zu suchen", behauptet ein estnischer Modernist, **Anton Hansen Tammsaare**. (Tammsaare 1986: 217). Das Fehlende in der Kultur müsste entlehnt werden: "Aber das, was unserer eigenen Literaturgeschichte fehlt, muss die Geschichte der Weltliteratur ergänzen", sagt Tuglas (Tuglas 1996: 54).

Das estnische literarische Feld entstand innerhalb des deutschbaltischen literarischen Feldes. Um die tradierte Struktur des Feldes zu brechen, um die bisher peripheren Positionen der estnischen Literatur ins Zentrum zu rücken, hatte die estnische Literatur die häretischen Positionen des Feldes zu besetzen und die orthodoxen in die Peripherie zu drängen, hatte sich durch die Ablehnung der dominanten deutschen Positionen zu legitimieren, "sich gegen die verpflichtende Bürde von Geschichte und Tradition aufzulehnen" (Annus 2000: 15). Dafür musste man einen kulturellen Kredit aufnehmen. Der Modernismus wurde in die estnische Literatur entlehnt, wodurch man sich von der verpflichtenden Bürde der deutschbaltischen Tradition frei kaufte.

Wenn man nun nach dem möglichen gemeinsamen Anteil der deutschbaltischen und estnischen Moderne sucht, vergleiche man das impressionistische Erzählverfahren Keyserlings mit dem von Tammsaare und Tuglas und erinnere man sich an das Wort Felix Ormusson (Tuglas): "Jedes Detail bekommt seinen Sinn, während das Ganze den Sinn seiner Existenz verliert" (Tuglas 1988: 102).



Dass das Leben nicht mehr im Ganzen wohnt (Nietzsche), haben beide Pole der historischen Gegensätzlichkeit im Baltikum um die Jahrhundertwende wahrgenommen. Aber diese gemeinsame Erfahrung heisst nicht mehr "baltisch".

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## Hermann Bahr: Das Verschwinden des Autors in seinem Werk

MARI TARVAS

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Unter den Autoren der Wiener Jahrhundertwende gehört Hermann Bahr (1863–1934) zweifellos zu denjenigen, die damals viel Furore gemacht haben, heute jedoch bei weitem nicht derartig bekannt sind. Wenn wir seinen Bekanntschaftsgrad etwa mit dem von Hofmannsthal vergleichen, ist heutzutage die Vorstellung von seiner Person und seinem Schaffen eher konfus. Einerseits ist dies darauf zurückzuführen, daß Bahrs Werke immer noch relativ schwer zugänglich sind — nur von wenigen Texten liegen Neudrucke vor, andererseits ist vieles für den heutigen Leser schwer genießbar. Darüber hinaus war er eher eine Person, die auch damals nicht so sehr durch seine literarischen Werke gewirkt hat, sondern vielmehr durch die Kraft seiner Persönlichkeit. Auch wenn er überaus produktiv war — sein Werk umfaßt 120 Bände –, so sind heute nur wenige von seinen Texten bekannt. Sein Name wird hauptsächlich mit wenigen Essays und nur einem seiner fiktionalen Texte, dem 1909 uraufgeführten Lustspiel *Das Konzert* verbunden. Und dennoch wird immer noch behauptet, Hermann Bahr sei kein unbekannter, vergessener Schriftsteller (vgl. Pias 1998: 12).

Er ist für die folgenden Generationen eine Person, die die verschiedensten literarischen Strömungen der Jahrhundertwende, angefangen vom Naturalismus, über Dekadenz und *l'art pour l'art*, den Impressionismus bis hin zum Expressionismus vertreten bzw. sich für diese eingesetzt hat, der als Vermittler dieser Strömungen in den deutschsprachigen Raum fungierte. Auch politisch — und

in religiöser Hinsicht — war er besonders wandlungsfähig: er stammte aus dem liberalen Bürgertum, wandte sich dann dem deutschen Nationalismus zu, entwickelte sich zu einem marxistisch orientierten Sozialisten, war Republikaner, Monarchist und schließlich Supra-Nationalist. Die wichtigste Forderung dieses Wendehalses war es: modern zu bleiben, und dieses eine Ziel hat er konsequent verfolgt. Im Sinne der Integration unterschiedlicher Ansätze mutet Bahr, einer der Vertreter der sog. Wiener klassischen Moderne, fast postmodern an, freilich, es handelt sich bei ihm nicht um ein Nebeneinander verschiedener Kunstgriffe, sondern eher um ein Nacheinander.

Analog zu den mit Bahr verbundenen Ambivalenzen zeigt auch die Rezeption seines Werks in Estland eigentümliche Tendenzen. Zum einen ist es auffallend, daß der Name Bahr hierzulande kaum jemandem ein Begriff ist. Dieser Umstand ist nicht weiter überraschend, denn auch manche deutschsprachigen Werke, die der Jahrhundertwende in Wien gewidmet sind, erwähnen ihn nicht bzw. nur in Parenthese. Sein Werk *Das Konzert* ist in Estland jedoch für viele ein wichtiges Beispiel des Komödiengenres, da es einst ein großes Theatererlebnis gewesen ist. Es ist eine eigenartige Erfahrung: man berichtet über Bahr — und niemand im Auditorium reagiert sonderlich, sobald man aber dieses Stück erwähnt, steigt ein warmes Lächeln über die Gesichter der Zuhörer, und zwar sowohl der älteren als auch der jüngeren.

Zum anderen kann man, rein statistisch gesehen, behaupten, daß die Rezeption seines Werks seit Anfang dieses Jahrhunderts mit einer beachtenswerten Intensität erfolgt ist. Wenn man von der Anzahl der Aufführungen, Übersetzungen, Rezensionen und ähnlichem ausgeht, kann man die estnische Rezeption von Bahr durchaus mit der eines Rainer Maria Rilke vergleichen. Daraus resultiert jedoch keineswegs ein solcher Bekanntheitsgrad der Person, wie es bei diesem der Fall ist: zwischen der statistischen Rezeption und der sich daraus ergebenden Bekanntheit besteht hier keineswegs eine direkte Beziehung.

Vor allem ist Bahr in Estland als Dramatiker bekannt. Seine theoretischen Ansichten erreichen die estnische Literaturpresse kaum, seine Vermittlerrolle wird eher nicht angedeutet und von seinen Prosawerken ist lediglich eine kurze Etüde „Ilus naine“



(Bahr 1927) publiziert worden. Demgegenüber sind seine Lustspiele seit Anfang des Jahrhunderts immer wieder recht erfolgreich gespielt worden.

Bahrs Werk wurde 1910 für die estnische Bühne entdeckt. In diesem Jahr wurde das Stück *Das Konzert* in Tallinn gleich zwei Mal aufgeführt. Somit erreichte dieses am 23.12.1909 uraufgeführte Stück die estnische Bühne mit einer beträchtlichen Geschwindigkeit. Zunächst spielte das Tallinner Deutsche Theater das Stück. Freilich, auf diese deutschsprachige Aufführung gibt es nur indirekte Hinweise (Hermann Bahri lõbumäng 1910), und es ist mir nicht gelungen, eine Rezension dazu zu finden.

Erste sichere Hinweise über Bahr auf der estnischen Bühne stammen dennoch aus demselben Jahr 1910, wo auch das Theater „Estonia“ das Stück *Das Konzert* aufgeführt hat. Ein Artikel in der Lokalzeitung, welcher das Stück vor der Uraufführung vorstellte, gab diesem kaum Hoffnung auf Erfolg. Der anonyme Autor schreibt:

Es ist ein Stück über das Leben der Wiener „feineren Gesellschaft“. Dieses Stück ist im Ausland sehr erfolgreich gespielt worden, was man wohl damit begründen kann, daß diese „feinere Gesellschaft“ dort auch existiert, welche sich dann im „Konzert“ widergespiegelt sieht. Der größte Teil unseres Publikums, d.h. des Publikums des Theaters „Estonia“, wird wohl kaum von diesem Lustspiel begeistert sein. Viele werden, vielleicht, fragen: „Was geht uns denn an, wie die leichtfertigen Frauen um einen Klavierkünstler schawenzend in Wien ihre Tage totschiagen?“ Man kann ja denjenigen, die so sagen, erwidern, daß er [Hermann Bahr] diese Gesellschaft mit der Künstlerhand dargestellt hat. Soviel ist dennoch wahr: was dem Publikum sehr fremd ist, wird ihm auch fremd bleiben und sehr wenig Interesse erwecken. Bahr ist ja auch nicht ein Shakespeare /.../ (Ib.)

Diese Widerspiegelungstheorie und der Versuch, das Dargestellte lediglich mit einer sozialen Schicht zu verbinden, mit dem das

Bauernvolk der Esten sich nicht identifizieren kann, sind aber nicht hieb- und stichfest. Das zeigt bereits die erste Aufführung des Stücks: Die erste Rezension, die nach der Uraufführung am 24. Juli 1910 — wieder anonym — erschien, ist von einem gänzlich anderen Ton getragen. Das Stück wird ausdrücklich gelobt, man findet kaum etwas bei ihm auszusetzen. Der Rezensent hebt vor allem die Bühnenwirksamkeit des Stücks hervor. Er stellt fest, daß die Stücke von Bahr langweilig zu lesen sind, auf der Bühne einen jedoch mitreißen (Hermann Bahri „Konzert“ 1910).

Unter anderem hängt der große Erfolg, der diesem Stück beschieden war, mit einer hervorragenden Besetzung zusammen. Die beiden männlichen Hauptrollen (Gustav Heink und Dr. Jura) haben sehr bekannte Schauspieler jener Zeit, Paul Pinna und Theodor Altermann, verkörpert.

Das Stück hat Furore gemacht. Im folgenden Sommer wurde es dann auch auf einer Rundreise der Theatertruppe durch die Städte Estlands gezeigt (vgl z. B. Tallinna Eesti Teatri...1911).

Nach dem Bombenerfolg der Konzertaufführung wurden in den folgenden Jahren immer wieder verschiedene Stücke von Bahr auf den Tallinner Bühnen gespielt. 1912 führte das Theater „Estonia“ das Stück *Die Kinder* auf (H.R. 1912), 1917 wird dasselbe Stück von einer Theatertruppe in den Räumlichkeiten von „Lootus“ gegeben („Lapsed“...1917), 1921 spielt das deutsche Theater *Das Prinzip* (W.M. 1921), 1922 das Dramatheater *Die Ehelei* (Ed.H. 1922). 1927 bringt das Rigaer Deutsche Theater *Den Meister* nach Tallinn (ArA 1927). Das Publikum hat all diese Aufführungen positiv aufgenommen, der Widerhall ist jedoch keineswegs mit dem des *Konzert* zu vergleichen.

Weiter ergibt sich eine längere Pause, wo nichts von Bahr gespielt wird. Ganz vergessen ist er zunächst jedoch nicht: so wird im Sommer des Jahres 1923 sein 60. Geburtstag gefeiert. Henrik Visnapuu gibt in der Zeitschrift *Looming* aus diesem Anlaß eine längere Übersicht über sein Leben und Werk (Visnapuu 1923). Dieser Artikel ist der einzige umfangreichere estnische Text über Bahr, in dem auch sein widersprüchlicher und komplizierter Werdegang dargestellt wird. Auch die sonst ausgeblendeten Vermittlertätigkeiten und Ambivalenzen seiner Geisteshaltung werden mitreflektiert. 1934 erscheint bereits drei Tage nach

seinem Tod in *Päevaleht* ein Nekrolog. Noch während des Krieges wird Hermann Bahr anlässlich der 80. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages am 19. Juli 1943 bedacht (Balk 1943).

Dann folgt unter der Sowjetherrschaft eine längere Phase des vollständigen Schweigens, die vor allem auf die damaligen politischen und ideologischen Verhältnisse zurückzuführen ist. Als Autor war Bahr eher „verdächtig“ und nicht mit der Theorie des sozialistischen Realismus vereinbar, die Bahrschen Themen — der erotische Reigen, die Eheproblematik, die Freiheit des Menschen etc. — waren im Nachkriegsestland politisch nicht gefragt. Erst in den 70er Jahren war die Lage dann soweit aufgelockert, daß Bahr wieder inszeniert werden konnte.

Die zwei Bahr-Aufführungen der Nachkriegszeit finden bereits unter gänzlich anderen, doch jeweils unterschiedlichen Umständen statt. Es wird das Stück *Das Konzert* gegeben. Damit konzentriert sich die Rezeption Bahrs nun auf ein einziges Werk und auf eine einzige Stadt (Tallinn) und darüber hinaus auf ein einziges Theater, das Dramatheater in Tallinn.

1972: unter den damaligen etwas freieren geistigen Verhältnissen durfte in der Estnischen Sozialistischen Sowjetrepublik *Das Konzert*, diese Richard Strauß gewidmete Salonkomödie, in dem — wie es damals hieß — mit dem Roten Arbeitsbanner ausgezeichneten Staatlichen Akademischen Dramatheater in Tallinn aufgeführt werden. Dies war eine Zeit, wo in Estland Stücke dieser Art eigentlich nicht gespielt wurden, und es war in dieser Hinsicht schon an sich ein Ereignis, daß dieses Stück auf die Bühne gebracht wurde.

Wie im Jahre 1910, herrschte auch 1972 vorher die Ansicht, daß das Stück kaum einen Erfolg haben könne (Vellerand 1996). Und wie damals hat das Stück eine unglaubliche Karriere gemacht. *Das Konzert* stand viereinhalb Jahre auf dem Spielplan und wurde insgesamt 217 Mal aufgeführt. Es wird darüber berichtet, wie sich die Menschen bereits um sechs Uhr in der Früh sich angestellt haben, um Karten für diese Vorstellungen zu bekommen. Und wieder Mal war ein Grund für den Erfolg des Stückes die hervorragende Besetzung: die beliebtesten Schauspieler der Zeit, die eben im Komödiengenre billierten, Eino Baskin, Ita Ever, Tõnu Aav haben unter der Leitung des legendären Regisseurs Voldemar



Panso gespielt. Die Kritiker lobten auch die Dialogführung. Insbesondere wird der Dialog zwischen Ita Ever (Marie) und Tõnu Aav (Dr. Jura) hervorgehoben (Kulli 1996). Ein weiterer Grund des Erfolges dürfte die sehr gelungene Übersetzung von Lembe Hiedel gewesen sein, eine Nachdichtung, die sprachlich sehr nuanciert und fließend ist.

Angeblich hatte der Schauspieler Eino Baskin, der in dieser Aufführung Gustav Heink spielte, in den 80er Jahren den Plan gehegt, dasselbe Stück im Theater Vanalinnaaudio zu inszenieren, doch aus irgendwelchen Gründen ist diese Idee nicht ausgeführt worden. Erst 1996 konnte er diesen Plan verwirklichen, freilich, in einem anderen Theater: im Estnischen Dramatheater, wie es nun hieß. Die Verbindung mit dem *Konzert* von 1972 war nicht nur durch den vormaligen Schauspieler und jetzigen Regisseur und dem Theaterhaus gegeben, auch zwei weitere Schauspieler wurden übernommen, nun spielten sie aber andere Rollen: die Marie und Dr. Jura der 72er Aufführung (Ever und Aav) nahmen nun als Ehepaar Pollinger teil.

Nicht nur diese personalen Bezüge führen dazu, daß die beiden Inszenierungen immer wieder mit einander verglichen werden. Der Riesenerfolg der Aufführung aus dem Jahre 1972 war und ist so stark noch im kulturellen Gedächtnis präsent, daß jeder weitere Versuch, das Stück auf die Bühne zu bringen, auf der Folie dieser gesehen wird. Und so ist es nicht weiter verwunderlich, daß der Vergleich der *Konzerte* meistens zugunsten der 1972er Version ausfällt. Es werden dem späteren Versuch gattungsspezifische Unsicherheiten vorgeworfen — die Schauspieler würden schwanken, ob sie gerade Farce oder Melodrama spielen. Es wird sogar sehr verallgemeinernd behauptet, daß die gesamte hiesige Komödientradition angesichts des wuchernden Volksstücks schlecht sei (Vellerand 1996). Und wieder mal hebt die Kritik eine besonders gelungene Szene hervor:

Diese ist ganz am Anfang, als die Logen sich mit den Verehrerinnen, denen Glutröte im Gesicht steht, füllen und Gustav Heink (Tõnu Kilgas) am Klavier tobt (ib.).

Bei dieser Feststellung ist auffallend, daß es sich hier um eine Szene handelt, die es im Originaltext von Bahr gar nicht gibt, die der Regisseur frei erfunden hat. Es ist überhaupt für die Inszenierung Baskins charakteristisch, daß er mit dem Text recht frei umgeht. Es ist nicht nur vieles gestrichen, es ist auch gelegentlich hinzugeschrieben worden. Das erstere ist nicht weiter verwunderlich, denn Bahrs Stücke sind oft stark gekürzt worden — wie der Autor mit Bedauern festgestellt hat.

Vielleicht liegt der Grund für die Erweiterungen in der Bemühung, sich um jeden Preis von der 72er Inszenierung abzusetzen. Vor allem hat man das Stück durch mehrere pantomimische Passagen ergänzt. Insbesondere das Dienstmädchen, Fräulein Wehner, figuriert — stumm — auffallend mehr, als es in der Originaltextvorlage von Bahr der Fall ist, eines Autors, dessen Dramatexte bekanntlich reichlich Regieanweisungen enthalten. Bahr war ja einerseits stets bemüht, die Art und Weise, wie seine Stücke im Theater verwirklicht werden sollten, möglichst genau festzulegen. Andererseits betonte Bahr immer wieder die Rolle des Schauspielers im Theater und wollte ihnen genügend Spielraum für Improvisationen lassen (Daviau 1984: 200).

Auch die umständlichen Personenbeschreibungen von Bahr hat Baskin keineswegs ernst genommen. So trägt Dr. Jura nicht nur anstelle von einem „kurzen, glatten, blonden“ Haar (Bahr 1996: 39) eine recht große, rötliche und krause Perücke, er ist auch keineswegs „klein, schwächlig, anscheinend schwächlich“, wie Bahr sich das vorgestellt hatte, sondern durchaus vital und kräftig, und eher harlekinenhaft. Damit wird die Gegenüberstellung Heink — Dr. Jura, Künstlernatur — Natur eines Wissenschaftlers, relativiert. Die beiden männlichen Helden werden innerhalb des „Viererplots“ — wie Markus Meier die Konstellation im *Konzert* bezeichnet hat (Meier 1997) — einander eher ähnlich, brüderlich, ergänzen einander. Sicherlich ist diese Eigenschaft auch im Originaltext vorhanden, hier wird aber darauf ein Akzent gelegt. Doch die Antithetik, ein zentrales Strukturprinzip vieler Stücke Bahrs, die Darstellung konträrer Menschentypen, kommt auf diese Weise nicht zum Tragen.

Damit komme ich zu den verschiedenen Interpretationsansätzen, die in der estnischen Presse insbesondere in Bezug auf

das repräsentativste Stück *Das Konzert*, aber auch zu Bahrs Schaffen im Allgemeinen vertreten worden sind.

Diesen wird zum Teil durch die estnische Übersetzung des Titels des *Konzerts* in gewisser Hinsicht eine Richtung angegeben: Die Nachkriegsinzenierungen finden nämlich unter dem erweiterten Titel — *Mees, naine ja kontsert* ('Der Mann, die Frau und das Konzert') statt. Damit wird die Aufmerksamkeit von vornherein auf die Thematik der Geschlechterbeziehung gelenkt und das Stück oft eben aus der moralischen Perspektive betrachtet. In diesem Fall fällt die Einschätzung auch leicht schlecht aus, wie etwa die vorher zitierte Rezension aus dem Jahre 1910 dies dargestellt hatte. Sie fällt vor allem dann schlecht aus, wenn der Rezensent sich nicht mit den dargestellten Figuren und Umständen — wohl vor allem mit Toleranz gegenüber Promiskuität — identifizieren und die dargestellte Problematik lediglich auf die mondäne Wiener höhere Gesellschaft beziehen möchte.

Einige weitere Interpretationsmöglichkeiten listet ein Betrachter aus dem Jahre 1910 auf:

Die einen halten es [„Das Konzert“] wohl für eine bittere Satire auf Frauenzimmer. Dies ist es ja auch zum Teil, vor allem auf diejenigen, die solche 'Meister' vergöttern. Die Anderen halten dieses Stück für eine Satire auf die Ehe, die Dritten auf die freie Liebe, die Vierten halten es für gänzlich sittenwidrig, die Fünften für die Verkündung einer neuen Moral usw. Richtiger ist wohl zu sagen, daß Bahr das Leben und den Menschen so darstellt, wie sie sind, und auch wenn diese Menschen nach Auswegen suchen und sogar gefunden gehabt wähen, sehen sie später ein, daß diese Wege keineswegs so glatt sind. „Alles bleibt beim Alten.“ (Hermann Bahri löbumäng 1910)

Leider wird nicht genauer ausgeführt, was unter diesen Ansätzen verstanden wird.

Während in diesem Stück immer wieder das Spielerische betont wird, in dem die Qualität dieses Stückes eben bestehen würde, finden genaue Leser in dem Drama auch 'störende Didaktik' (Kulli 1996). So etwa streicht der Schauspieler und Regisseur Baskin die



entsprechenden Teile aus dem Text. Damit wird Bahr auf das Lustspielhafte, Witzige reduziert, seine philosophischen Ansprüche und Versuche werden nicht berücksichtigt. Bezeichnenderweise betreffen die Kürzungen die weitschweifigen Reflexionen über die Ehe und die Freiheit des Menschen, wie diese nach Bahr Dr. Jura im ersten — längsten — Akt vortragen sollte. Auch der Teil, wo Dr. Jura erklärt, warum er überhaupt Delfine geheiratet hatte, ist gestrichen. Wenn man sich die estnischen Inszenierungen anschaut, bleibt die Frage nach den Beweggründen des Handelns von Dr. Jura offen. Diese Kürzungen reduzieren den ernsten Hintergrund des Textes, eine Tendenz die die Stücke Bahrs auch im deutschsprachigen Raum betroffen hat und dessen sich Hermann Bahr durchaus bewußt war und was er zu vermeiden versucht hat: er markierte in einigen Dramen die Sätze, die auf keinen Fall weggelassen werden dürfen (Bahr 1920: 4). Die erzieherischen Absichten Bahrs kollidieren mit den Erwartungen, die an Komödien gestellt werden, aus dem Gesichtspunkt der Bühnenwirksamkeit sind dann die witzigen Dialoge und die Situationskomik doch wichtiger als die lückenlose Argumentation und die Begründung der Handlung.

Als Fazit kann man sagen, daß die Rezeption des Werks von Hermann Bahr in Estland durchaus den internationalen Tendenzen entspricht: Bahr, der Autor von 40 Theaterstücken, ist auch hier jemand, der mit nur einem Stück, dem „Konzert“, verbunden wird, welches wiederum schon eine eigene Tradition aufweist. Interessant ist dabei, daß Bahr in Estland quasi in diesem Drama verschwindet: man kennt den Autor des beliebten Stückes nicht, ein Phänomen, das sonst mit Kinderbüchern verbunden ist. Sonstige Aspekte seiner Person und Tätigkeit — die für die deutschsprachigen Länder so wesentliche Vermittlungs- und Propagierungstätigkeiten moderner künstlerischer und literarischer Strömungen, die sich in seinen Essays widerspiegeln, sein Einsatz für die Moderne, aber auch seine Aktivitäten als Theaterdirektor sowie das Schreiben epischer fiktionaler Texte — sind in Estland kaum präsent. Gewiß ist das eine Reduktion der Vielfalt, doch zeigt es, wo die Stärken des Bahrschen Schaffens in einem größeren Kontext liegen und was die Nachwelt an seinem Werk besonders schätzt.

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## **Le thème de la guerre: récit romanesque, mythologie cinématographique et image télévisée**

**GEORGES FRÉRIS**

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Mon étude axée sur la comparaison de la présentation du thème de la guerre, à travers trois moyens communicatifs: le roman, le cinéma et la télévision, aborde le problème de la relation entre la réalité et la fiction, tel qu'il se présente aujourd'hui, à l'ère où la technologie de l'information influence la littérature et vice versa. C'est pourquoi très brièvement, je me contenterai, en premier lieu, à définir le roman de guerre comme moyen dépositaire diachronique d'une mémoire et en second lieu, je présenterai le récit romanesque guerrier illustré par le cinéma et la télévision, pour extraire par les interrelations des narrations, quelques considérations esthétiques, dues surtout aux effets de transgression et de transition de l'idéologie par la technologie.

Issu du roman historique<sup>1</sup>, le roman de guerre connaît une prédominance avant, pendant, et peu de temps après un conflit, c'est-à-dire qu'il touche un événement vécu par une génération, par une classe sociale. Le même thème guerrier, abordé plus tard, non vécu, à l'aide des archives, devient un mythe, perd sa valeur

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<sup>1</sup> Sur les raisons théoriques de l'apparition et de l'évolution du roman de guerre voir le concept d'"horizon d'attente" de Hans Robert Jauss, où entre autres, il soutient que les théories des genres font partie de ce système d'inertie nécessaire à la continuité de la littérature (Jauss 1978). Adrian Marino soutient et justifie aussi l'évolution et la transformation des genres, d'une manière analogue à celle de Jauss. (Marino 1977: 81-114). Sur les raisons sociaux-historiques, voir (Rieuneau 1974, Gluckmann 1974, Riegel 1978, Fréris 1993, Kondylis 1997).



de témoignage, n'a rien de la pulsion originale; il devient un simple outil de manipulation idéologique, n'exprimant plus un vif sentiment, mais une réalité préfabriquée. Nous considérons donc comme roman de guerre l'œuvre des auteurs qui ont vécu les événements d'un conflit, soit comme protagonistes, soit comme simples spectateurs ayant eu l'occasion de voir l'histoire se transformer en "mythe". La raison de ce choix est que le roman de guerre est créé par ceux qui participent à une guerre ou qui revivent ce même événement, plus tard dans leur mémoire (Cru 1929, 1930). Au contraire, nous excluons les auteurs qui sans avoir vécu un conflit, utilisent la guerre comme un thème ou un mythe et considèrent le conflit comme un événement historique.

Cette définition du roman de guerre et sa provenance du roman historique, s'explique et se justifie par le concept de l'"horizon d'attente" de Hans Robert Jauss, qui désigne, avant tout, le processus des expériences antérieures de lecture qui change selon la perspective du lecteur-observateur, lequel se déplace dans le temps (Jauss 1970: 79-101). Les vieilles normes esthétiques du motif guerrier peuvent prédominer quantitativement, mais les normes esthétiques nouvelles, minoritaires, l'emportent qualitativement. Loin de mener à une typologie idéaliste, le concept d'"horizon d'attente" reste un excellent outil d'interprétation et de compréhension de l'évolution des genres ou des formes littéraires, offrant une issue à l'inertie du système des genres littéraires et permettant l'évolution et la continuité de la littérature (Raimond 1967). Ainsi conçu le roman de guerre, qui est avant tout un texte littéraire, il semble à première vue qu'il exclue toute approche poétique, son auteur étant préoccupé avec le réel, à déposer le témoignage de sa vérité, à décrire une partie de l'histoire événementielle vécue par ses lecteurs (Girard 1963, Lejeune 1971).

Ainsi défini, le roman de guerre qui est avant tout un texte, n'exclue pas la poétique même si l'auteur apparaît être préoccupé avec le réel, le vrai, le sujet, le sens, le contenu, l'idéologie, l'histoire (Lukacs 1974: 32, 1975: 49-63). Conséquence de cette attitude est que l'idéologie qui ressort du texte du roman de guerre tend à se confondre avec les "mythes" d'une société ou d'une classe sociale. Dans aucun cas, l'idéologie d'un roman de guerre

n'exprime la ou une vérité absolue. C'est pourquoi par "idéologie" nous attendons le rapport imaginaire à un monde réel, le texte du roman de guerre étant axé sur un réel supposé connu par le lecteur (dates, lieux, référents etc), ce qui rend plus intéressante l'analyse des institutions, des jeux de pouvoir, des moments historiques de crise ainsi que les passages textuels qui s'y réfèrent. Il ne faut pas oublier que les auteurs de roman de guerre, parallèlement à leurs intentions littéraires, ont toujours pris soin de laisser un "message". Ils ont voulu, en écrivant leurs œuvres, se délivrer de l'aventure-chimère vécue.

Ainsi élaborées, les notions de roman de guerre et d'idéologie apportent un grand impact à la mémoire collective, conçue comme l'ensemble des valeurs et d'événements qu'une société s'approprie à tel point que cet ensemble avec le temps devient tradition historique, mythe. Cette tradition historique, que souvent l'histoire rationnelle nie, a une telle force, qu'à travers la littérature, orale ou écrite, elle devient un paramètre important, ne représentant pas quelque chose d'étrange à l'individu, mais une réalité et un prétexte qui lui permet de prendre conscience de son comportement. Cette tradition historique, que le temps rend mythique, bien que vivement critiquée par la critique historique avec ses critères scientifiques objectifs, exerce un impact sur toute conscience individuelle et collective parce qu'à travers l'histoire, l'individu découvre son monde spirituel. Si les événements historiques (guerres, combats, victoires, défaites etc) pèsent fort sur tout individu, le fait de les revivre intérieurement par le récit romanesque ou de se les rappeler, selon les circonstances, c'est-à-dire la foi intérieure au mythe historique, entretenue par la tradition y compris littéraire, est une réalité qui constitue et conserve le monde intérieur de la conscience d'un individu, d'un peuple, d'une nation (Balibar-Wallerstein 1990).

Cette tradition historique ou mythique, qui la plus part des fois est une variation fictive d'une réalité, n'est pas une simple mention aux événements; elle inclue aussi des comportements "originaux", elle décrit des codes d'action obligeant l'individu de se comporter selon les modèles "mythiques". Toute déviation de ces "prototypes" ou "archétypes" est vivement critiquée, à moins que le nouveau comportement, à son tour, ne crée un nouveau "mythe",

lequel dessert un autre besoin ou bien offre une certaine solution à un problème. Sous ce prisme, il est évident que le récit romanesque qui se rapporte au thème de la guerre, à des événements réels, exprime une idéologie et le discours se transforme en idée, mythe, falsifiant l'histoire qu'il embellit. Si donc l'histoire exprime une réalité simple, la fiction romanesque transforme la guerre lui attribuant des dimensions que l'idéologie exige (Voir Barthes 1972, Perrot 1976, Caillois 1972, Cassirer 1989, Dumézil 1968, 1970, Eliade 1975, Lévi-Strauss 1958). L'histoire ne sert pas seulement de cadre romanesque au roman de guerre; elle est aussi l'essence de la vraisemblance, la confirmation d'un témoignage pour un événement que le lecteur a vécu ou connu. Si le rôle de l'histoire est décisif pour la connaissance et l'évolution de l'individu, dans un groupe social, la fiction de l'histoire contribue à renforcer cette tendance, surtout quand le lecteur ne parvient pas à distinguer le mythe de la réalité, c'est-à-dire quand se réalise le but de la narration, l'identification du fantastique avec le réel, "l'effet de réel", selon l'expression de Barthes (1968, 1982: 89).

Sous cette optique, le thème de la guerre traité par le cinéma apparaît être une simple expression de l'histoire, ce qui est vrai, en partie. Seulement cette histoire événementielle présentée sur l'écran n'est qu'un prétexte pour le metteur en scène, son but étant à équilibrer la fonction tragique du récit des événements ressentis par les héros, avec le mouvement du récit cinématographique qui décrit une vision bien définie des événements, c'est-à-dire il semble que histoire réelle et narration cinématographique visent à décrire un "monde" idéologique. Ce monde se révèle à travers une série d'éléments réels que la fiction, grâce surtout à la technique du montage transforme et déforme pour les besoins de la narration cinématographique. Car si le récit romanesque s'adresse à l'imaginaire, le récit cinématographique, même révu au vidéo, s'adresse avant tout aux yeux. Le récit romanesque oblige son lecteur à recréer les événements selon ses capacités et ses affinités, alors que le récit cinématographique exprimé par l'image, le discours et le bruit, impose au spectateur l'effet voulu et recherché par le metteur en scène, c'est-à-dire que le spectateur, à première vue subit le mythe de la représentation animée du passé. Aussi l'évolution du héros-narrateur du récit romanesque nous découvre



non seulement son passé, les origines de sa tradition historique, mais simultanément il nous décrit aussi ses intentions pour l'avenir. Pour des raisons techniques le récit cinématographique, ne parvient pas à bien nous exprimer ce côté imaginaire; il préfère par l'intermédiaire de la ressemblance à nous représenter et à nous transporter au temps passé, à nous faire revivre un certain vécu imaginaire sous nos yeux, à mettre l'accent sur l'aspect mythique de la réalité décrite, pour mieux esquisser les caractères et les situations, pour mieux faire passer le message idéologique voulu par le créateur du film (Gaudreault 1988: 87-88).

Par contre, le lecteur du récit romanesque parvient par étapes à déchiffrer tout au long du récit la projection de mémoires et l'intention du narrateur, alors que le héros-narrateur nous est décrit, comme c'est le cas des *Thibault* de R. Martin du Gard, de *Don paisible* de M. Cholokhov, de *A l'Ouest rien de nouveau* d'E.-M. Remarque, de *L'Histoire d'un prisonnier* de S. Doukas, de *La Voie royale* d'A. Malraux etc. Grâce à cette technique, ce qui évolue dans le récit c'est seulement le héros-narrateur qui utilise son imagination et sa mémoire comme moyens pour voyager dans un temps imaginaire, où présent, avenir et passé sont bien distincts. Parallèlement l'auteur de roman de guerre aborde des grands problèmes, c'est-à-dire qu'il passe de l'actualité à l'avenir, et transformant son discours narratif, de descriptif en littéraire, il pousse le lecteur à imaginer, ce qu'il passe sous silence. Le discours qui découle de cette projection de la réalité sur la dimension imaginaire permet au roman de guerre de créer une idée-but, une idéologie-résultat. C'est pourquoi le lecteur prend conscience de la naissance de cette idée, il devient à son tour témoin de cette prise de conscience et de l'évolution de cette idée, il constate le passage du personnel au collectif et simultanément il imagine le sort de cette prise de conscience dans l'avenir. De cette coexistence de la réalité (histoire) avec l'utopie (fiction)<sup>2</sup> découle la

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<sup>2</sup> Rappelons que G. Bachelard soutenait qu' "image littéraire, c'est un sens à l'état naissant;... Signifier autre chose et faire rêver autrement, telle est la double fonction de l'image littéraire.... Quand cette parole prend conscience de soi, alors l'activité humaine désire écrire, c'est-à-dire agencer les rêves et les pensées..." (Bachelard 1983: 283-284).

réussite diachronique du roman de guerre, puisque le roman de guerre, bien qu'il décrive un milieu limité, il est toujours orienté vers un avenir meilleur. Tout est axé sur l'avenir, en particulier la mémoire collective qui agit et fonctionne sous des apparences individuelles, comme la puissance motrice qui essaie d'affronter la crise présente et d'esquisser l'avenir<sup>3</sup>. Le cadre idéologique des romans de L. Guilloux, de R. Dorgelès, d'Ernest von Salomon, d'Alexandre Soljénitsyne, de I. Venezis, de Y. Beratis, d'I. Kandaré, de R. H. Mottram, et de bien d'autres, en sont la preuve.

Cette attitude a pour résultat que le discours du roman de guerre exploite le climat instable de la guerre et en se fondant sur des situations, des descriptions réelles qu'il varie à volonté et selon ses buts, de présenter plus vraisemblables et plus convaincantes ses promesses "fictives" idéologiques. Le discours fictif donc du roman de guerre vise à la réalisation des buts de la mémoire collective, exigeant toujours la fidélité à la tradition historique, exploitant idéologiquement les comportements des héros, critiquant toujours le pouvoir. Même les écrivains qui acceptent la guerre, comme Montherlant, Jünger, Dragoumis, et autres, ne manquent pas l'occasion de condamner les conditions négatives de la guerre et d'essayer d'humaniser, via les modèles de la mémoire collective, le monde à venir. C'est pourquoi tout écrivain de roman de guerre s'engage<sup>4</sup>. Certains même militent,

<sup>3</sup> Retenons la phrase de Roland Barthes que "L'écriture, étant la forme spectaculairement engagée de la parole, contient à la fois, par une ambiguïté précieuse, l'être et le paraître du pouvoir, ce qu'il est et ce qu'il voudrait qu'on le croie." (Barthes 1972: 22).

<sup>4</sup> L'acte d'engagement peut aussi s'expliquer par la théorie de l'horizon d'attente de H.-R. Jauss qui soutient que "L'histoire de la littérature n'aura pleinement accompli sa tâche que quand la production littéraire sera non seulement représentée en synchronie et en diachronie, dans la succession des systèmes qui la constituent, mais encore aperçue, en tant qu'histoire particulière, dans son rapport spécifique à l'histoire générale. Ce rapport ne se borne pas au fait que l'on peut découvrir dans la littérature de tous les temps une image typique, idéalisée, satirique ou utopique de l'existence sociale. La fonction sociale de la littérature ne se manifeste dans toute l'ampleur de ses possibilités authentiques que là où l'expérience littéraire du lecteur intervient dans

comme Barbusse, Choloikhov, Myrivilis, Céline, Latzko, Hasek. Sous l'aspect de l'engagement, ils lèguent au lecteur le témoignage personnel d'un événement social, ils contribuent à créer et à maintenir une mémoire collective. Leur discours ne consiste pas seulement à la description de la violence ou à ridiculiser le pouvoir. Leur discours vise premièrement à présenter leur opinion personnelle au nom d'un groupe social sur un événement réel vécu, devenu "histoire", récit, mémoire, fiction, et deuxièmement à assimiler, à comprendre, à définir, à expliquer, toujours selon leurs critères personnels, un événement réel qui pèse et pèsera dans l'avenir.

Or, aujourd'hui le récit romanesque guerrier est dépassé<sup>5</sup>. Il semble appartenir à l'histoire, devenant simulateur du témoignage historique, puisque les moyens et les effets cinématographiques créent une atmosphère bien plus complexe et plus "vraisemblable" que celle du récit romanesque<sup>6</sup>, lequel exige de la part du lecteur une reconstruction imaginaire, souvent assez difficile à faire. L'écran cinématographique parvient bien mieux que le livre à rendre sublime le thème guerrier, à le faire paraître plus convaincant comme "patrimoine" culturel d'une mémoire idéologique (Laffay 1964, Fuzelier 1964, Ropars-Wuilleumier 1970). Et ceci découle du fait que le scénario pour la réalisation d'un film ne signifie pas grand chose, étant un "sous-genre", jamais respecté ou plutôt soumis à être trahi, modifié, dépassé, le scénariste n'étant qu'un simple technicien du cinéma et non pas un auteur, un créateur. La caméra cinématographique recrée l'histoire "réelle",

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l'horizon d'attente de sa vie quotidienne, oriente ou modifie sa vision du monde et par conséquent réagit sur son comportement social." (Jauss 1978: 72-73, 80).

<sup>5</sup> "La narratologie littéraire se ressent aujourd'hui d'une certaine forme d'essoufflement. Pareille situation est tout à l'opposé de ce qui se passe dans le champ des études cinématographiques." (Gaudreault 1998: 325).

<sup>6</sup> "Vue du côté littéraire, la multiplication des travaux d'inspiration narratologique sur le cinéma et les arts visuels au cours de la dernière décennie est plus souvent considérée comme une preuve de succès de cette discipline issue du champ romanesque, la narratologie, que comme un apport." (Jost 1991: 19).



récrée la guerre, lui donnant l'apparence du vécu, du vrai. Grâce au triomphe des effets, le récit cinématographique parvient même à s'en passer des acteurs, des paysages et d'un tas d'éléments nécessaires, ne se souciant qu' à attirer, qu' à impressionner le spectateur. Le résultat est que ces effets élargissent l'imagination, amplifient le thème de la guerre, le transforment. C'est pourquoi toute transformation selon l'objectif idéologique du créateur du film (disposition des lieux, paysages physiques, symboles, positions politiques, explosions d'action, gestes sous-entendus etc) c'est-à-dire ce qui s'est couvé et ce qui est compromis, est rendu par des images, qui fonctionnent pour "couvrir" et non pas pour "découvrir" la réalité, pour déformer et organiser une réalité vraisemblable. Ceci est encore dû à la technique du montage, réalisé sous deux étapes: la première, où le monteur coupe, colle, pour le raccord de la copie finale des diverses séquences et la seconde, où le monteur applique les effets sonores assemblés, le mixage. Ainsi le montage est l'élément qui donne un sens au récit cinématographique, un sens qui s'inscrit comme une image à la conscience du spectateur. Ce qui explique pourquoi le récit cinématographique insiste sur et exploite l'action extérieure d'un événement guerrier, alors que le récit romanesque explore la vie intérieure des personnages. C'est-à-dire que le créateur du récit filmique élargit, agrandit la fiction du récit romanesque, rendu plus vraisemblable donc plus imaginaire, plus inventif donc plus mythique. C'est le cas des œuvres où les héros romanesques ont des traits non pas du vécu réel, mais du vécu imaginé par le metteur en scène pour ses propres raisons. "Il y a une série de techniques, d'œuvres et d'institutions fondés sur un besoin insaisissable à faire certifier le réel" soutient Barthes (1972: 88), pour que Gisèle Freund ajoute: "on ne peut plus peindre uniquement ce qu'on voit[...] L'œuvre d'art doit avoir un contenu objectif directement issu de son entourage [...] l'optique réelle se confondant avec la réalité elle-même" (Freund 1974: 34). Autrement dit, l'optique réelle de l'image doit imiter la réalité.

Cette distance entre l'actant et le destinataire devient encore plus directe et immédiate, via l'image télévisée (reportage, documentaire etc.). Le petit écran a la capacité de rendre son spectateur "témoin" de l'acte, à faire de lui un juge "autonome" et "impartial"

sans l'intermédiaire de l'écrivain ou du metteur en scène, à lui inspirer de nouveau "combats", à le faire engager immédiatement. Car la télévision produit elle aussi un discours, le texte télévisé, composé de mots, d'images, de sons, un texte dont le sens est très vaste, puisqu'il dépend d'une série de traits caractéristiques, adressé à un public bien plus vaste que celui du récit romanesque ou cinématographique. Les exigences de vraisemblance, qui constituent le but de la production du texte "imaginaire" télévisé, deviennent plus perfides, "secrètes" et par conséquent problématiques pour présenter un texte sur un fait "réel", la guerre, témoinnée d'une série d'événements. Ce texte télévisé feint de couvrir justement la réalité, utilisant le procédé de la mimétique.

Dans sa tentative de rendre la réalité, la télévision utilise aussi la rhétorique qui se présente sous l'aspect du charme de la technologie, présentant un discours en pleine évolution, un discours capté sur l'action, un discours qui n'exige aucun effort de la part du spectateur, puisque c'est un discours qui persuade, convainc et reflète la réalité. Cette rhétorique du discours télévisé se présente sous trois dimensions: l'image, la présentation et le son. Ces trois effets constituant la structure du discours télévisé, la cohérence du texte télévisé, présentent un grand intérêt pour l'analyse des allégories et des symboles, selon lesquels le discours télévisé se structure comme un discours réel, compréhensif, convaincant. Ce qui explique pour la représentation de la guerre de la part de la télévision, le souci minutieux pour organiser ses mécanismes visuels, son attention pour enregistrer les sons, son soin particulier pour le choix des énoncés (Silverstone 1988). Un mécanisme que quotidiennement le téléspectateur vit, puisque la guerre constitue la une des informations d'un grand nombre de chaînes de télévision<sup>7</sup>. Ce qui explique aussi la grande diversité de la représentation du même fait réel d'un canal à l'autre, d'un discours à l'autre, pour des raisons idéologiques. Récemment on a vu cette pratique se réaliser avec la représentation "in vivo" de la guerre du golfe, du débarquement des forces de l'ONU en Somalie, de la guerre au Kosovo ou en Tchétchénie, une guerre contée, vue et

<sup>7</sup> Umberto Eco se rapportant au sujet de la guerre des informations parle de "guerrilla sémiologique" en 1967. (Eco 1983: 23-32).

présentée sous l'imaginaire pré-fabrique des responsables de l'armée et non plus des participants combattants ou des reporters envoyés.

Cette objectivité polyvalente et multiforme a comme résultat de neutraliser l'imagination du téléspectateur. Par contre quand il lit un roman de guerre, il a la possibilité de créer dans son esprit une série d'images où l'abstrait prend une forme concrète. Il se compose un monde d'images qui constitue le monde qu'il veut créer. Toutes ces images s'incluent dans un temps et dans un lieu plus ou moins concret, issu de ses propres expériences. Avec la télévision, le téléspectateur possède la matière visuelle et son imagination n'a pas beaucoup de champ libre. Il en est de même avec le cinéma, qui tue en partie l'imagination, définissant en quelque sorte les lieux, le comportement et l'attitude de l'histoire, arrêtant en sorte l'imagination à une vision. Le récit romanesque présente de ce côté une plus grande liberté d'action à l'imaginaire, puisque en fin de compte il est le résultat d'une mémoire personnelle qui peut faire partie d'une mémoire collective, alors que le film ou le document télévisé est le résultat d'un travail collectif et ne peut contribuer à la mémoire collective que s'il est admis de la mémoire individuelle. C'est pourquoi le thème de la guerre par le récit romanesque du roman de guerre reste aujourd'hui un genre littéraire dépositaire d'une mémoire culturelle; le cinéma rend le thème de la guerre plus spectaculaire, voire plus mythologique alors que l'écran de la télévision lui prête une simple place privilégiée pour un certain temps.

Les trois formes de récit, via le recours à la réalité, visent à un message idéologique adressé au public par la vraisemblance et l'émotion des effets sur l'imaginaire des destinataires, transgressant ainsi la réalité au profit du but recherché à transmettre au public. Cette transgression sur l'imaginaire est cependant moins violente par le récit romanesque qui laisse plus d'initiative au lecteur à déchiffrer le message; le récit cinématographique donne un ton plus convaincant tandis que le récit télévisé laisse peu de place à la reconstruction du message, puisque récit télévisé et message se confondent, l'objectif télévisé étant devenu le synonyme de la réalité et par extension de la vérité. On peut donc conclure que le récit de guerre, à travers les trois formes artistiques



utilise des moyens techniques capables à faire revivre le vécu chez le lecteur. Mais ce trait est toujours présenté et orienté dans l'intention de contribuer au renforcement, au maintien ou au changement d'une idéologie acceptée par un groupe social.

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## Epique et parodie dans *Taras Boulba* de Gogol en rapport avec le roman historique de son temps

BIAGIO D'ANGELO

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L'étude des genres est impossible en dehors du système à l'intérieur duquel ils sont en rapport. Le roman historique de Tolstoi n'est pas en rapport avec le roman historique de Zagoskine, mais plutôt avec la prose de son temps. (Tynianov 1965: 128)

Cette célèbre affirmation de Tynianov pourrait nous aider afin de percevoir le genre littéraire non comme un élément isolé et suffisant à définir le fait littéraire, mais plutôt comme un ensemble très varié et en même temps unitaire. Essayons dès lors de substituer le nom de Tolstoi, tiré de l'exemple de Tynianov, par celui de N. Gogol, dont un roman historique, voire son seul roman historique, nous intéresse ici, et que nous chercherons à considérer dans la perspective donnée par le théoricien russe.

A notre avis, toutefois, il est indispensable de partir du rapport de système existant entre productions d'un même genre littéraire dans une seule période historique déterminée. Ce n'est qu'à ce moment-là, que nous pourrions tirer profit du rapport avec toute la prose de cette période, comme le suggère Tynianov lui-même. Pour mieux comprendre ce système, qui est plutôt culturel qu'exclusivement littéraire, C. Guillén nous offre un éclaircissement:

L'écrivain opte pour un certain genre, en excluant d'autres, et en s'éloignant d'autres genres encore; il y a des genres qui sont par exemple des contre-genres,



et les poétiques offrent des espaces idéaux, constitués par des options et différences. La célèbre phrase de Tynianov «Le roman historique de Tolstoi n'est pas en rapport avec le roman historique de Zagoskine, mais plutôt avec la prose de son temps» voulait dire, à mon avis, non seulement que Tolstoi s'opposait à ses prédécesseurs, mais aussi qu'il prenait ses distances par rapport à d'autres formes, non historico-romanesques, d'écriture contemporaine, en se rapportant à elles à travers le contraste et le dépassement dialectique. (Guillén 1992: 432)

C'est un jugement qui nous sera justement utile par rapport à *Taras Boulba* et au roman historique de son temps. Guillén donne finalement une conclusion très pertinente à ce propos. Il préférerait ajouter un axe *horizontal*, donnant un caractère différentiel à l'étude des textes littéraires, plutôt qu'accepter la coupure *verticale*, (agoniste, hiérarchique) qu'ltamar Even Zohar décrit dans sa conception de l'idée de polysystème.

Commençons par la lecture subversive de V. Nabokov pour comprendre quelle serait la nouveauté que contient en soi *Taras Boulba*, cet étrange hybride romanesque de Gogol, par rapport à la production littéraire du romantisme russe. Dans son brillant essai sur l'auteur des *Ames mortes*, Nabokov écrit qu'avant Gogol, la prose narrative russe était plate et de mauvaise qualité. Mis à part la polémique et le snobisme qui caractérisaient la perception intellectuelle de Nabokov, il faut admettre la génialité de l'œuvre de Gogol. Maître reconnu par des auteurs tels que Dostoïevski, Leskov, Saltykov-Scedrin et Belyj, Gogol a expérimenté dans sa carrière artistique différents genres littéraires, dont le roman historique, représenté par *Taras Boulba*.

Cette œuvre a été considérée pendant longtemps comme l'un des romans historiques les plus représentatifs du canon romantique russe. *Taras Boulba* tire son originalité de la reconstruction épique et mythique d'une période historique bien déterminée. Dans cette altération de la réalité historique, apparaît un élément sentimental qui donne une couleur nouvelle à la description des événements relatés.

A travers son style et la représentation de ses personnages principaux, Gogol s'approprie toutes les œuvres d'inspiration historique de son temps (Narezhnyj, Bestoujev-Marlinskij, Zagoskine et Pouchkine, naturellement). Toutefois, il laisse entrevoir des influences du roman historique de Walter Scott, véritable modèle littéraire de l'écriture narrative de la Russie du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle; à côté de Scott, il y a aussi la poésie épique ukrainienne ainsi que la poésie épique classique.

*Taras Boulba* est une œuvre qui occupe une place spéciale dans la production gogolienne, car c'est l'exemple d'un texte qui a été réécrit à deux reprises, avec un interval de cinq ans. La première version date de 1833, c'est-à-dire quand l'auteur avait à peu près vingt-quatre ans. Cette version avait été publiée dans le recueil *Mirgorod*, caractérisé par la fusion de tons historico-épiques ainsi que d'une atmosphère tout à fait originale où se trouvaient mélangés le réalisme psychologique et l'humour. Le nom même, *Mirgorod* signifie à la lettre «monde-ville» et nous fait penser à la création d'un microcosme où l'auteur pouvait plus aisément développer son argument. Cinq ans plus tard Gogol réélabore cette œuvre à laquelle il se sentit toujours très lié, en améliorant le style et en augmentant fortement la dimension épique. En effet, les passages qui concernent les batailles ont fait penser à certains critiques à l'influence de la lecture de *Illiade* homérique que Gogol connaissait par la traduction de Gnedich. (Brown 1986: 277-278)

Que Gogol voulait devenir une espèce d'Homer du peuple ukrainien avait été, en fait, remarqué par la sensibilité de V. Briusov qui avait souligné par exemple, l'insistance sur la formule *tak govorit ataman*, (*ainsi parla l'ataman*), typique de la forme épique et des chansons de geste. (Briusov 1979: 134)

On connaît bien l'histoire: Taras Boulba est un cosaque fier et orgueilleux, typique personnage digne de la meilleure épopée homérique, qui combat les Polonais au nom de l'orthodoxie. Le véritable argument du roman est toutefois celui de l'initiation à la guerre de ses deux fils, Ostap et Andrei. Ce dernier, qui incarne le véritable héros romantique, tombe amoureux d'une belle polonaise, pour laquelle il trahit sa patrie et son père, et meurt frappé par la main de ce dernier. Pendant longtemps la présence de

ces deux personnages, Ostap et Andrei, si jeunes et si violemment catapultés dans l'expérience dramatique de la guerre, même si normale en ces temps-là, a tenu à l'écart ce roman, considéré plutôt comme production mineure ou bien comme littérature pour l'adolescence. C'est le même destin qui a touché des chefs-d'œuvres tels que *Les aventures de Huckleberry Finn* de Twain ou même *Moby Dick* de Melville, dont la plupart des lecteurs garde un souvenir adolescent approximatif. On peut répéter la même affirmation en ce qui concerne *Taras Boulba*.

En effet, ce roman a été considéré et lu, par des nombreuses générations de Russes, comme un bon exemple d'histoire de la patrie, où Gogol donnait des descriptions précises et attachantes des us et coutumes ukrainiens du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, et en plus comme une simple œuvre de jeunesse de l'auteur des *Ames mortes*. Les jugements sur *Taras Boulba* n'ont jamais été univoques. Un seul exemple peut être valable et significatif: un critique très attentif et connaisseur de la littérature russe du romantisme, W. E. Brown, ne réussit pas à cacher ses doutes sur le résultat créatif de Gogol, en définissant le roman historique du Russe pas du tout caractéristique de cet auteur et une faillite artistique. (Brown 1986: 277)

Les modèles littéraires connus et utilisés par Gogol sont ceux de Walter Scott et naturellement Pouchkine, son contemporain. Gogol a pris largement en considération non seulement ses prédécesseurs tels que Zagoskin et Bestoujev-Marlinski, surtout pour l'originalité de leur prose historique, mais aussi les auteurs anglais, dont s'inspiraient presque tous les écrivains russes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les récits de *Mirgorod*, par exemple, présentent de nombreuses interpolations de la part de l'auteur; ces interpolations donnent un effet que nous pourrions définir *stéréoscopique*. C'est-à-dire que la narration est entre les mains d'un auteur omniscient, qui enregistre toutes les actions avec objectivité, sans montrer ses sentiments, avec une profondeur *froide*; mais quand l'auteur laisse échapper quelques commentaires, on peut remarquer un certain contraste entre les deux types de narration. Toutefois l'intrusion de l'auteur est discrète et ne fait qu'exalter la description objective des événements, au lieu de souligner la présence encombrante de l'auteur même. Encore une fois grâce à la réception de la littérature anglaise, Gogol avait appris ce procédé de Sterne, dont



*Tristram Shandy* et *Un voyage sentimental* avaient été traduit en russe quelques années auparavant. Gogol utilise ce mécanisme narratif avec prudence, surtout dans la deuxième version définitive de *Taras Boulba*, où le procédé est caractérisé par des descriptions de la nature où l'auteur dévoile ses intentions de ton et d'atmosphère; ce style portera à l'invention du *skaz*, mélange de forme du discours oral ainsi qu'écriture riche et soignée, qui frappera les ornamentalistes de la langue russe tels que Leskov et Belyi.

Mais ce serait une erreur de se limiter à l'influence de la littérature anglaise et de Sterne sur cette œuvre. A ce propos, d'autres critiques ont relevé la présence de la soi-disant *école frénétique* française, qui était largement répandue et traduite pendant cette période. La Russie de ce temps, avide de connaissance du monde occidental, était presque envahie par les traductions d'œuvres françaises. Gogol, selon le témoignage de Pavel Annenkov, son fidèle ami écrivain, ne reconnaissait pas en W.Scott son auteur étranger favori. Bien que le genre dominant de l'époque était le roman historique à la manière de Scott, Gogol, lui, était fortement attiré par des romans tels que *Han d'Islande*, *Bug-Jargal* et *Le dernier jour d'un condamné à mort* de V. Hugo, par le feuilleton *Les Mystères de Paris* d'Eugène Sue, et par les romans noirs *Les mémoires du diable* ou *Robert Macaire* de Frédéric Soulié. Il n'y a aucun doute que ces romans ont laissé des traces remarquables dans la composition des scènes de tortures dans la partie finale de *Taras Boulba*. En outre, V. Vinogradov a étudié d'une façon exhaustive l'influence précise d'un auteur oublié aujourd'hui, Jules Janin, et spécialement de sa nouvelle *L'âne mort et la femme guillotinée* de 1832. (Vinogradov 1976: 76–100). Il souligne la coexistence des motifs du sentimentalisme romantique uni à la présence constante de la pensée de la mort, avec ses aspects les plus sadiques et effrayants.

Evidemment, un roman historique basé sur le roman d'horreur français ou sur le procédé de l'épique, plutôt que sur la lignée des écrivains historiques nationalistes était considéré un hybride et une réalisation vide pour les contemporains de Gogol. Un censeur anonyme, cité par V. Gippius, disait à propos du roman historique gogolien avec une ironie subtile:

On a commencé graduellement à découvrir le secret de la composition des récits historiques. Voici certains éléments fondamentaux de cette nouvelle théorie. Prenons peu de personnages historiques, habillons-les en costumes nationaux et construisons finalement des intrigues autour d'eux. (Gippius 1924: 69)

Le recenseur anonyme pensait sûrement à l'absence quasi totale de véritables personnages historiques dans les romans de cette période, par rapport aux précédents. Le besoin de compréhension des faits russes avait poussé avec retard Pierre le Grand à encourager des études sérieuses sur le passé du pays; après les œuvres de Tatitchev et surtout de Lomonosov (*La plus ancienne histoire russe du début du peuple russe jusqu'à la mort du grand prince Yaroslav I, ou jusqu'à 1054*, publiée en 1766), l'histoire «scientifique» avait laissé la place à des thèmes littéraires tirés de l'histoire patrie, comme par exemple, Karamzine qui fut un historiographe remarquable, ainsi que l'initiateur du roman historique en Russie. Les règles de Karamzine étaient pleinement acceptées par la nouvelle génération de romanciers historiques. L'histoire pour Karamzine devait être utile et agréable. Utile, car elle devait justifier une existence bien ordonnée des choses et des événements; agréable, car la «contemplation» de telles choses et de tels événements devait nourrir l'esprit et la sensibilité des lecteurs.

Inspiré de ces principes, M. Zagoskine avait composé son *Youri Miloslavski* (1829), qui raconte l'occupation de Moscou par les Polonais en 1612. L'épisode crucial pour l'histoire russe était relégué au plan scénographique pur, alors que les personnages sont représentés à la manière de Scott, ce qui avait déterminé le succès du roman dans ces années-là. Si d'un côté Zagoskine décrivait la vie historique, en cherchant à expliquer l'existence nationale, de l'autre il s'efforçait de caractériser l'esprit national par la peinture des personnages historiques.

La méthode de Scott, c'est-à-dire la mise en évidence d'un héros narratif dans un certain moment historique et au deuxième plan les véritables héros historiques, qui agissaient comme *deus ex machina* dans l'intrigue inventé par l'auteur, était suivie par tous

les écrivains des années trente du Romantisme. I. Lajchnikov, par exemple, décrit dans *Le dernier page* (1831) l'époque de Pierre le Grand, dont il traite avec admiration son œuvre d'expansion politique et culturelle dans un cadre romanesque très complexe. Dans *La maison de glace* (1835) il exaspère le patriotisme national de la première œuvre, à travers la description de la bataille entre Russes et Baltes au temps de l'impératrice Anna Ioannovna. Dans *L'hérétique* (1838), l'auteur invente le personnage de Anton Ehrenstein, un jeune médecin au temps de Ivan le Terrible qui est exécuté par la fausse accusation d'avoir empoisonné un patient.

Par rapport à ces romans moins connus que les chef-d'œuvre pouchkiniens, *Taras Boulba* peut être considéré comme la tentative de Gogol de pousser à l'extrême les exemples de fiction historique qu'il connaissait. En effet, considéré sous un angle formaliste, ce roman-épopée peut être lu d'une manière «parodique» qui mériterait d'être approfondi.

Nous savons bien que les formalistes russes ont dédié au phénomène de la parodie des pages fondamentales et à Gogol surtout une attention toute spéciale. Pour les formalistes tous les procédés littéraires peuvent avoir une orientation «parodique» (*parodijnost*) par rapport aux normes et aux valeurs artistiques. Cette orientation ne doit pas nécessairement avoir comme résultat un effet comique, car le comique pourrait plutôt être *neutralisé*. Tynianov, par exemple, parlera de l'existence d'une parodie même tragique. Le résultat est une vision théorique d'un autre système, une tendance stylistique envers un autre code. Alors cette orientation parodique implique toujours aussi une orientation envers un autre procédé, *une autre parole*. Pour cette raison, les formalistes, et spécialement les premiers, affirmaient que les textes *dialoguent* et que l'intertextualité implique toujours *in se* un caractère *parodique*. Nous rappelons ici simplement qu'à côté de la parodie, les formalistes expliquaient le phénomène du grotesque dans les textes littéraires comme une inversion de valeurs dans l'univers sémantique du texte, une exagération de certains aspects et de perspectives réduites dans la narration. Cette parodie va donc dans le sens d'un renversement et d'un dépassement des textes littéraires précédents.



Parmi les critiques, M. Bakhtine souligne le caractère comique et hyperbolique de nombreuses aventures et héros de *Taras Boulba*. Il affirme que le phénomène esthétique le plus remarquable de cette œuvre de jeunesse de Gogol réside justement dans l'aspect caricatural, c'est-à-dire dans la tendance stylistique à glisser vers le grotesque et le parodique.

M. Bakhtine avait entrevu avant tous la présence d'images et de styles tirés de Rabelais dans un bref article publié comme postface à l'édition russe de sa célèbre étude sur l'auteur de *Gargantua et Pantagruel*.

Dans *Mirgorod* et *Taras Boulba* des traits de réalisme grotesques commencent à paraître. La tradition du réalisme grotesque était très forte et très vivante en Ukraine, ainsi qu'en Biélorussie. /.../ Les «récréations» des «bizuteurs» universitaires avec leur règles et habitudes ont joué un rôle spécifique dans le développement de la culture ukrainienne. Cette tradition était encore bien présente dans les institutions ukrainiennes académiques ainsi que religieuses au temps de Gogol et même plus tard. Elle était vivante dans les conversations de dîner de l'intelligentsia ukrainienne d'origine modeste, qui venait en majorité du monde religieux. Gogol ne pouvait pas ne pas les connaître directement par leur vive forme orale. /.../ Pour cette raison, des éléments du folklore ukrainien populaire et du folklore de fête, ainsi qu'éléments du réalisme grotesque des séminaristes se retrouvent d'une façon organique et cohérente dans des œuvres telles que «Vij» et «Taras Boulba», de la même manière que des éléments analogues se retrouvaient réunis organiquement trois siècles avant dans le roman de Rabelais. (Bakhtine 1965: 528)

La lecture du roman gogolien selon Bakhtine attire, donc, notre attention. En effet, le début même de *Taras Boulba*, si impétueux et digne du style véhément du récit oral (comme par exemple des chansons de geste) est véritablement indicatif de ce style rabelaisien:

«Tourne-toi voir, petit! Tu en as une allure Où avez-vous pris ces soutanes de popes? C'est donc ça qu'on porte au collège?» (Gogol 1991: 31)

Nous sommes déjà assez éloignés du caractère descriptif des *incipit* d'autres romans historiques de bonne qualité du temps de Gogol, tels que *Youri Miloslavski* ou *La fille du capitaine* ou bien encore l'inachevé pouchkinien *Le Nègre de Pierre le Grand*.

On remarquera soudain aussi comme Gogol est intéressé à l'élément lyrique, qui est personnifié, dans les premières pages du roman, par la mère des fils de Taras Boulba. Il s'agit d'une figure — météore, pourrait-on dire, qui n'apparaîtra qu'au début du livre, mais qui restera présente grâce au style évocateur du roman. Peut-être que seul Pouchkine aurait égalé Gogol, en créant le personnage féminin du roman historique du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle par excellence, c'est-à-dire Masha, justement, la fille du capitaine. La mère des deux fils de Taras Boulba est décrite par Gogol selon l'image archétypique de la femme obéissante à la volonté despotique de son mari, consciente de sa propre condition d'infériorité par rapports à l'art de la guerre.

Mais en réalité c'est la scène initiale qui nous pousse à penser à l'intuition génial de Bakhtine. Le critique russe avait en effet perçu la présence intertextuelle de Rabelais, unie à l'oralité des chants populaires et des légendes ukrainiennes. Tous les dialogues semblent, en fait, naître des chansons d'un ménestrel qui est en train de raconter les gestes de ces cosaques. (32–33).

En outre, on ne peut que penser au style *pantagruélique* de Rabelais quand on lit des phrases riches et évocatrices comme celle-ci:

Pas de beignets, de pain d'épice, de galettes aux pavots et autres sucreries apporte-nous un mouton entier, une chèvre, de l'hydromel vieux de quarante ans et de l'eau-de-vie de fantaisie, avec des raisins secs et autres fanfreluches, mais de la pure, de la mousseuse, qui danse et qui pétille comme une enragée. (34)

Ou bien encore dans cette liste véritablement rabelaisienne d'objets:

Dans les coins, sur des étagères, on apercevait des cruches, des bouteilles et des flacons bleus et verts, des coupes d'argent ciselé, des gobelets dorés d'origine vénitienne, turque, circassienne, qui étaient passés par toutes sortes de chemins et avaient changé trois ou quatre fois de propriétaire avant d'échouer dans cette pièce, ce qui était fort courant en ces temps aventureux. Des bancs en bois d'orme, faisant le tour de la pièce; une immense table se dressant sous les icônes, dans le coin d'honneur; un vaste poêle revêtu de carreaux de faïence bariolés, tout cela était bien connu de nos deux jeunes gens, qui revenaient chaque année passer les vacances chez leur parents qui revenaient à pied, car lis ne possédaient pas encore de chevaux, et puis il n'était pas d'usage que l'on permît à des écoliers de monter à cheval. (35–36)

Youri Mann, un spécialiste russe de l'œuvre gogolienne et l'un des savants les plus enclins à suivre les lectures bakhtiniennes de Gogol, rappelle que les scènes de danse présentes dans *Taras Boulba* sont des véritables représentations du carnaval, selon la notion que Bakhtine donne en parlant de Rabelais. (Mann 1978: 16–21)

Toutefois ce carnaval, qui sera repris et perfectionné dans les *Soirées du hameau près de Dikanka*, a une valeur toute particulière. Le carnaval gogolien, qui au Moyen Âge était le lieu de la joie et de l'ivresse, le lieu de la suprématie de la vie sur la mort, présente ici une dynamique de changement singulier; le carnaval même, comme concept du peuple qui s'amuse et qui défie la mort et la douleur et les règles imposées par la nature, est *carnavalisé*, parodié, renversé. Le lieu de l'allégresse devient ainsi le lieu de la malédiction, de la présence du diable. L'ambivalence mise en relief par Bakhtine (tristesse et joie, mort et naissance, etc.) qui portait à l'unité des opposés, à l'unité du monde qui meurt et du monde qui naît, se transforme chez Gogol en une nouvelle réalisation. L'ambivalence reste telle quelle, ambiguë, double. Le lieu de la joie devient chez Gogol non seulement son contraire, le lieu de la tristesse, mais plutôt le lieu de l'incompréhensible, du



mystérieux, du sortilège. Un tel procédé grotesque et parodique du carnaval est parfaitement visible dans les nouvelles de Dikanka, ainsi que dans *Taras Boulba* où la danse, l'ivresse, l'amour (comme celui qui lie André à la belle enchanteresse polonaise) ont toujours un aspect de souffrance voire de mort.

Le renversement parodique, dans le sens d'un dépassement des clichés des œuvres littéraires précédentes, est un procédé typique justement du roman historique de Gogol. Pour le roman historique de son temps, un rôle stimulant avait été joué par la spécificité du roman historique même. Déjà, dès les preuves de Karamzine, le roman historique russe devait répondre non seulement aux exigences du canon littéraire, mais aussi aux exigences à caractère populaire, c'est-à-dire il devait être le plus possible patriotique. A la différence de ses contemporains pour lesquels le roman historique était le moyen artistique d'interrogation du passé de la Russie ancienne, alors que le patriotisme était presque exclusivement lié à une défense du sentiment nationaliste, Gogol donne au roman historique et au mot patriotisme une lecture nouvelle et esthétique. Il était, en fait, fermement convaincu que l'esprit du peuple russe possédait la même richesse spirituelle et les mêmes beautés que les lecteurs russes étaient habitués à admirer dans les romans historiques de peuples étrangers. Toutefois pour éviter de tomber dans le piège du nationalisme torve et violent, il choisit une région mythique comme l'Ukraine du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, plutôt que la Russie sauvage de Moscou ou bien l'époque de Pierre le Grand, considérée comme la plus contradictoire de toute l'histoire russe par excellence.

Avec *Taras Boulba* Gogol donne une évocation poétique et littéraire de cette Ukraine qu'il connaissait parfaitement dès sa naissance. En outre, à travers l'utilisation d'un Moyen Age fantastique, tissu de fables et de chansons de geste, un Moyen Age qu'il préférerait à toutes les autres périodes de l'histoire, il recrée un véritable mythe cosaque rabelaisien, qui mérite d'être reconsidéré comme l'anneau de conjonction entre le roman historique selon le cliché du Romantisme et la prose *hyperréaliste* de Leskov jusqu'aux romanciers du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Belyi, Remizov, Zoscenko). Un Gogol, donc, rénovateur et parodiste, selon la définition de Tynianov (1929), qui nous fait oser dire que tous les

génies de la littérature sont toujours, en quelque mesure, des parodistes.

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## Representations of Woman Writer's Identity in *A Writer's Diary* by Virginia Woolf and the Diaries of Aino Kallas

LEENA KURVET-KÄOSAAR

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In Latin, diary (*diarium*) means 'daily allowance'. Due to the repetitive yet fragmented nature of their daily lives, keeping a diary has been generally considered the most suitable form for women to record their lives, "a distinctively feminine activity ... a personal and personified creation, the opposite of masculine alchemy" (Russ 1984: 102). In her comprehensive study of diaries and journals of literary women, Judy Simons underlines women writers' special relationship to the diary since they

have [been] both drawing on it as substance for their own public writing and retaining it as a mechanism in their own lives in its traditional role as therapy, consolation and a means of expression of their own divided sensibility (Simons 1990: 15).

In the current article I wish to discuss some comparative issues in *A Writer's Diary* by Virginia Woolf and the diaries of a well-known Finnish-Estonian writer Aino Kallas within the critical framework of autobiography theory and the critical discussion of women's diaries, addressing their self-identification as (women) writers and the conflict with the traditional position and role of the women of their times.

Despite the existence of about 30–40 years of autobiography studies, the status of autobiography is still somewhat ambiguous, both genre-wise and in terms of factuality and/or fictionality of the narrative. Although the scope of my article does not enable a



thorough theoretical discussion of autobiography, I propose a brief survey of some problematic aspects concerning autobiography studies in order to place the discussed works into an apprehensible critical context.

Autobiography as a literary genre has become the subject of more extensive and systematic critical and theoretical attention relatively recently; the first works that are still of critical relevance today date back to the 1960s (e.g., *Truth and Design in Autobiography* by Roy Pascal (1960), *Conditions et limites de l'autobiographie*, by Georges Gusdorf (1956), *The Value of the Individual* by Karl Weintraub (1978)). As a field of critical study, autobiography studies emerged in the early 1980s. In traditional autobiography theories that focused on the autobiographies of St. Augustine, Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin, Goethe, Thomas Carlyle, and Henry Adams, the manner of conceiving selfhood can be considered the main defining criterion. This can be illustrated by the emphasis on "a conscious awareness of the singularity of each individual life" in Gusdorf's theory (Gusdorf 1980: 29) as well as by Olney's consideration of the "separate selfhood [as] the very motive of creation" for the autobiographer (Olney 1972: 23). Another highlighted aspect was the representative nature of autobiography, formulated as "the contemporary intellectual outlook revealed in the style of an eminent person who has himself played a part in the forming of the spirit of his time" (Misch 1950: 45). Autobiography was defined as "establishing a consistent relationship between the self and the outside world" (Pascal 1960: 9) or as a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is on his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (Lejeune 1989: 4).

The above-mentioned characteristics of autobiography, formulated by white male Western theorists, was not especially illuminative where women's autobiography or, by the same token, the autobiography of non-Western cultures was concerned. The interest in the specificity of women's autobiography and the need to formulate "the kind of [autobiographical] narratives women have told" as well as "the ways in which such narratives inscribe the self" (Bunkers and Huff 1996: 7) can be traced back to the mid-eighties (e.g., *Women's Autobiography*, edited by Estelle Jelinek,

1980, *The Female Autograph* by Domna Stanton, 1984, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* by Sidonie Smith, 1987). As a critique of Gusdorf's individualistic concept of the autobiographical self, Susan Stanford Friedman asserts the need to recognize that

the self, self-creation, and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities and many non-Western peoples [because of a] culturally imposed group identity; the very sense of identification, interdependence, and community are the key elements in the development of a woman's identity (Friedman 1988: 34–38).

“What precisely would it signify for a woman's life and her narrative to be ‘representative’ of a period?” asks Sidonie Smith in her *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* (Smith 1987: 8), drawing attention to the fact that “very few women have achieved the status of an ‘eminent person’ and those who have done so have more commonly been labelled ‘exceptional’ rather than ‘representative women’ and proposing that “such women and autobiographies would more accurately be ‘unrepresentative’ of their period” (ib.). Leigh Gilmore, in a more recent work on women's autobiography asserts the need to

claim autobiography as a kind of writing and not a genre per se in order to emphasize further the extent to which women's autobiography invades, permeates, and also is invaded by canonical genres. Erupting in texts where it is not licensed, women's self-representation has frequently been silenced or marginalized because it has not been interpreted/ named/authorized as such (Gilmore 1995: 42).

Within autobiography studies, diaries as works that “focus on impressions and mental states from day to day without concern for continuity”(Gusdorf 1980: 37) were, until recently, considered unworthy of serious theoretical and critical discussion. One of the reasons of the recent increase in the critical interest in diaries is related to the poststructuralist doubting of the empiricist concept of the unified and rational self. A re-definition of “a self as a

position, a *locus* where discourses intersect" (Nussbaum 1988: 132) presents the diary as a "discourse that often presents a self lacking an obvious center and a smooth continuity"(Nussbaum 1988: 132) in a much more favorable light.

Commonly associated with private writing, the audience being the writer him/herself, emerging at the point when "the subject begins to believe it cannot be intelligible to itself without written articulation and representation" (Nussbaum 1988: 135), the diary raises the issue of the boundaries between the private and the public spheres. Felicity Nussbaum, one of the few critics who has attempted to 'conceptualize' the diary, asserts that the "marginalized and unauthorized [private] discourse in diary holds the power to disrupt authorized versions of [public] experience" (Nussbaum 1988: 136). Furthermore, diaries themselves can be separated into (truly) private diaries and diaries as public documents, intended for an external readership.

Although diaries often seem to be formless and artless from the point of view of canonical works of literature, they often bear marks of modelling after literary and non-literary models. The consciously altered form of the traditional diary format (e.g. balancing between diary and autobiography) sometimes indicates a conscious wish to convey meaning via artistic structuring. The diaries of writers, for example such as Anaïs Nin or Virginia Woolf, are often self-consciously designed to be read as works of literature.

In a diary entry from January 20th, 1919, Virginia Woolf mentions the "rapid haphazard gallop at which her diary swings along, sweeping accidentally up several stray matters which she should exclude if she hesitated but which are the diamonds in the dustheap"(Woolf, V. 1978: 24). In the foreword of her five volumes of diaries, Aino Kallas warns her reader that s/he would "look in vain for absolute consistency in these fragmented notes, since each day has it's own content and truth which is always necessarily limited and momentary; it is a daily truth."(Kallas 1994: 6). Taken together, these short extracts address some major critical issues concerning the women's diary: self-reflexivity, use of "true present", narration as a kind of action (Abbot 1984: 24), fragmentariness, triviality, dailiness (Moffat and Painter 1974: 5),



inclusiveness (Hogan 1986: 11), and the changing self in women's diaries (Simons 1990: 12).

Although not all critics of women's diaries go as far as to claim that it is "possible that women began the idea of private, and later, public articulation of quotidian organization of internal experience" (Nussbaum 1988: 134), many consider the diary form an analogue to women's "emotional, fragmentary, interrupted, modest, private, restricted, trivial, and formless lives" (Moffat and Painter 1974: 5). In its distinction between the mind and the body, Western epistemology relates women first and foremost with the latter. The daily that is articulated in the diaries is commonly related to the bodily and separated from the universality of the mind in favour of the latter (Bunkers and Huff 1996: 5).

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Apart from being among the few women who managed to succeed as writers in the first half of the twentieth century and, in addition to various 'public' forms of writing, kept a diary for an extended period of time, Virginia Woolf and Aino Kallas seem to have little in common. Woolf's life dominantly centred around the British cultural scene; Kallas did not feel quite at home neither in Finland, nor in Estonia and somewhat surprisingly to an agreeable degree in London where she spent twelve years as the wife of the ambassador of Estonia to Great Britain and later as an increasingly well-known writer and public figure. Virginia Woolf never had any children, Aino Kallas gave birth to five children, four of whom survived. Virginia Woolf was economically relatively independent to pursue the career of a writer; also The Hogarth Press, a publishing house established by her and her husband Leonard Woolf in 1917 gave her relative freedom to write as she pleased. The days of Aino Kallas were filled with maternal duties and household chores, leaving far less time for literary activity than she would have desired. Being a well-read and well-educated woman for her time, the intellectual and cultural climate in Tartu at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was at times lacking in scope and worldliness to suit her more refined tastes and her position as a Finnish writer using Estonian motifs ambivalent. Both women

suffered from unstable health, Virginia Woolf predominantly from mental problems, Aino Kallas from recurring lung disorders.

Virginia Woolf started keeping a diary in 1915 and continued until her death in 1941, although she did not write regularly every day. According to Leonard Woolf, her diary "gives 27 years of consecutive record of what she did, of the people whom she saw, and particularly of what she thought about those people, about herself, about life, and about the books she was writing or hoped to write" (Woolf, L. 1978: 11). Virginia Woolf's complete diaries, edited by Anne O. Bell, were published in five volumes in 1977—84; unfortunately I have been unable to use them for the current article.

Aino Kallas started keeping a diary as a schoolgirl and continued until 1943. Her autobiographical work *Vaeltava vieraskirja* ('A Wandering Guest Book') was published posthumously in 1957. Kallas later destroyed her first diaries and her diaries covering the years 1931–1943 were lost during the war and have never been found. Her published diaries include five volumes: *Pärjapunuja* ('The Wreath-maker', diary 1897–1906), *Jäätanud šampanja* ('Frozen Champagne', diary 1907–1915), *Hinge sild* ('Spiritual Bridge', diary 1916–1921), *Suurlinnade udus ja säras* ('In the Glamour and Fog of Cities', diary 1922–1926), and *Pööripäevad* ('Equinoxes', diary 1927–1931).

Academic interest in women's diaries seems to focus mainly on common women for whom diary is the only form of writing they ever practised. These diaries are usually centred around the girlhood-marriage-childbirth-old-age type life cycle of women, frequently illuminating a certain era and cultural space, commonly conveying lives as much through gaps as through inclusions, sometimes bearing evidence of literary models and fictionalisation. The diaries of Virginia Woolf and Aino Kallas can be, in Sidonie Smith's terms considered 'unrepresentational,' since both women were well-known writers and internationally renowned public figures of their times, that certainly granted them a privileged position in their respective societies. However, 'privileged' meant vastly different things for Virginia Woolf and Aino Kallas.

For Woolf, it meant the total absence of all maternal concerns and many concerns related to managing a household; it also meant

a relatively unlimited freedom to write the way she pleased due to the jointly owned publishing house with her husband. In the life of Aino Kallas, being privileged was first and foremost manifested in the relationship with her husband Oskar Kallas who accepted her need to take time off from her family not only for her writing but for enriching her inner life, be it even in the form of intense emotional relationships with other men (Juhan Luiga, the Latvian painter Jan Rosenthal, a renowned Finnish poet Eino Leino). For both women it meant a far greater say in the cultural issues of their time as women were generally granted.

Margo Culley, in her Introduction to *A Day at a Time: Diary Literature of American Women, from 1764 to 1985* (1985), emphasizes the need to remember that "as invaluable as women's life-records are as historical sources containing a kind of 'truth' about women's lives not found in other places, we must remember that diaries and journals are texts, that is, verbal constructs" (Culley 1998: 217). Based on Culley's observation as well as on theoretical assumptions formulated by Felicity Nussbaum, I do not claim that my analysis of the diaries of Woolf and Kallas reveals what being a woman writer really meant for them; I can only discuss the representation and construction of their identity as writers as articulated in their diaries.

According to Lynn Bloom's classification, both diaries belong to the category of "private diaries as public documents" (Bloom 1996: 23), characterized by wider scope, high variation in form and literary techniques, self-contained nature, existence of a central character (the diarist) seen through a central consciousness (Bloom 1996: 28–33). Aino Kallas edited her diaries for publication herself; Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary*, containing "practically everything which referred to her own writing" (Woolf, L. 1978: 13), was edited and published by her husband in 1953. It is clear that in both cases what is accessible for the reader is a text that has been transformed from its original form for public readership.

Although Leonard Woolf admits that the process of publishing extracts of diaries and letters "distort[s] or conceal[s] the true character of the diarist or letter-writer and smooth[es] out the wrinkles, warts, frowns, and asperities" (Woolf, L. 1978: 11–12),



he nonetheless decided to publish the diary of his wife. Sirje Olesk, in her afterword to the diaries of Aino Kallas, mentions that when editing her diaries, Aino Kallas made "modest stylistic changes, leaving out some intimate details concerning her family and friends as well as entries that later proved to be inaccurate" (Olesk 1993: 189). There is also textual evidence in both diaries that their authors thought about a wider readership at several points during the process of keeping the diary. This feature would place the diaries into Blooms's category of private/public rather than entirely private documents even if they had not been published.

\* \* \*

"I can write and write and write now: the happiest feeling in the world," reads Virginia Woolf's journal entry from December 13, 1924 (Woolf, V. 1978: 97). Writing is an issue that is addressed in Woolf's diary on a daily basis; the reference, however, is not always done in such an elevated and celebratory manner. The reader of Woolf's diary gets an impression that writing, be it her novels, literary criticism, or 'scribbling' in the diary, and reading, both re-reading her own work and reading other writers, occupied most of her time. The diary records the process of production, publication, and reception of all Woolf's major works, making visible her increasing fame as a writer over the years. Woolf's relatively successful involvement in writing and her devotion to the calling seem to leave no room for questioning the extent of her self-identification as a writer. Interestingly enough, the self that emerges from the diary is not always that of a woman who, at most points of her literary career, could claim with certainty her position in the literary world.

On April 8, 1921 Woolf confides in her diary: "Well, you see, I'm a failure as a writer. I'm out of fashion: old: shan't do any better, /.../ my book prematurely out and nipped, a damp firework" (Woolf, V. 1978: 52). A few pages later, after asserting that it would not make a difference to her if she wrote "for half a dozen instead of 1500" (Woolf, V. 1978: 53), she adds quite a curious remark: "I think the only prescription for me is to have a thousand

interests — if one is damaged, to be able to let my energy flow into Russian, or Greek, or the press, or the garden, or people.” (Woolf, V. 1978: 53–54). Here Woolf seems to caution herself from viewing her writing as her profession or as her calling, advising herself rather to consider it as a non-serious activity, more or less like a hobby. The kind of writing that she did practice in a leisurely manner was keeping a diary, or, to use her own words, ‘scribbling’. Woolf uses this word several times when mentioning her diary; interestingly enough she also uses the same word in a later entry to refer to one of her novels, *The Years* (Mrs. Dalloway) as a “mass of scribbled typewriting” (Woolf, V. 1978: 316), (December 29, 1935).

In the following rather sketchy entry, vividly presenting a kind of inner dialogue in the mode of stream-of-consciousness, Woolf focuses on her possible talents as a writer:

But who knows — once one takes a pen and writes?  
How difficult not go making reality this and that,  
whereas it is one thing. Now perhaps this is my gift:  
this perhaps is what distinguishes me from other  
people: I think it may be rare to have so acute a sense  
of something like that — but again, who knows? I  
would like to express it too (Woolf, V. 1978: 169),  
(September 10, 1927).

The hesitant and speculative tone of the entry, its fragmented structure containing two question marks and two dashes, and the choice of words (the phrase ‘who knows?’ and the word ‘perhaps’ occurring twice on four lines), seems once more to reveal Woolf’s breach of self-confidence as an experimental (woman) writer. However, it also clearly indicates that the diary can be looked upon as a place of literary experimentation for Woolf, a testing-ground for developing new writing techniques and a work of art in itself.

Sydney comes and I’m Virginia; when I write I’m  
merely a sensibility. Sometimes I like being Virginia,  
but only when I’m scattered and various and  
gregarious. Now, so long as we are here, I’d like to

be only a sensibility (Woolf, V. 1978: 72), (August 22, 1922).

The extract quoted above is noteworthy for the manner Virginia Woolf presents herself as a writer; it strives to eliminate the writing 'I' by attributing both the act of writing and authorship to an impersonal undefined 'sensibility', thus making herself possibly a mere vehicle conveying, for example, some sort of universal flow. Where she claims an 'I', it is multiple, disorganized and communal. These features, perfectly fitting the general characteristics of women's autobiography, are playfully illustrated on the pages of the diary via conscious fragmentation, experimenting with style, and jumping from one topic and tone to another with no visible transition.

It is evident from the diary that Woolf was seeking a rather specific position in the British literary world with a clear ambition for a lasting reputation in the future. "My own interest in being a writer," writes Woolf on February 18, 1922, "is in some queer individuality, not in strength, or passion, or anything startling. People with this gift go on sounding long after the melodious vigorous music is banal" (Woolf, V. 1978: 68). The position she desired was that of an experimentalist and within this framework her diary, "leaving a distinct mark on her modernist enterprise," (Abbot 1996: 236) has certainly contributed greatly to the development of her style of writing.

Although Woolf once refers to her diary as a "kindly blank-faced old confidante" (Woolf, V. 1978: 52), she mostly seems to view her diary as a kind of semi-public body of writing. According to Judy Simons, Woolf saw her diary from the beginning "as a purely professional enterprise, not an opportunity for psychological scrutiny" (Simons 1990: 169-170). At a closer look at Woolf's self-identification as a writer, a variety of conflicting positions emerge. One way to interpret this would be to claim that this is evidence of the insecurity of the position of women in the literary world, applying even to the probably most well-known woman writer of the twentieth century. On the other hand, the playfulness and relative absence of literary norms that her diary clearly demonstrates are in itself a proof of Woolf's self-



confidence as a writer, especially when considering the fact that much of the experimenting in the diary found its way to Woolf's novels. Yet another way to look at the diary would be to recognise the contradictory voices as a distance that Woolf creates to possibly hide the problematic aspects of her self-identification as a woman.

Personal matters are not discussed in great detail in Woolf's diary. One of the issues that has interested me has been the relation between motherhood and literary creativity. On December 20, 1927, after returning from her sister Vanessa's party, Woolf wrote:

The little creatures [Vanessa's children] acting moved my infinitely sentimental throat. And yet oddly enough I scarcely want children of my own now. This insatiable desire to write something before I die, this ravaging sense of the shortness and feverishness of life, make me cling to my one anchor. I don't like the physicalness of having children of one's own. /.../ And perhaps I have killed the feeling instinctively; or perhaps nature does. (Woolf, V. 1978: 154), (December 20, 1927).

Virginia Woolf's biographers have repeatedly discussed the relationship between Woolf's mental health and the fact that reportedly the decision never to have children was taken by Leonard Woolf. Virginia's suicide attempt in September 1913 has also been frequently related to this decision. However, a comparison with the life of Aino Kallas, a mother of four, indicates that by not having children, Virginia Woolf could dedicate herself more fully to her writing, both emotionally and physically. In the quoted extract, Virginia Woolf explains that the fact of not having any children of her own is related to her literary ambition; she also demonstrates knowledge of the difficulty of combining both roles. The metaphorical use of childbirth for literary creativity after the publication of *The Three Guineas* ("This is the mildest childbirth I have ever had" (Woolf, V. 1978: 355), once more underlines Woolf's awareness of the conscious choice to give up real children for her 'brainchildren', or at least her wish to present herself in this manner.

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In the first volume of her diaries, Aino Kallas records a conversation with a well-known opera singer Aino Ackté, concerning woman artists and the balance between personal happiness and the career as an artist. The fact that Aino Ackté claims having preferred the second to the first (Kallas 1994: 130), makes a deep impression on Aino Kallas who was at the time 21 years old. This is perhaps the first mention of what later became one of the driving forces behind her diary: the conflict between the need to adhere to certain social norms related to marriage and parenthood and the freedom and spontaneity Aino Kallas needed for her literary activity.

The diaries of Aino Kallas differ to a considerable extent from those of Virginia Woolf. If Woolf carefully avoided the mention of most personal matters, for Kallas the diary functioned as a locus of articulating the intensely felt myriad of personal impressions, feelings, and thoughts concerning her marriage, her children, and her work. If the diaries of Woolf serve as stylistic and formal evidence of her development as a modernist writer, Kallas seems to focus more on the content. Although entries focusing entirely on writing and the literary career take up fewer pages than the same topic in the diary of Woolf, they are clearly presented throughout the diary an aspect of crucial importance for the self-identification of Aino Kallas. Kai Laitinen, in his comprehensive work *Aino Kallas* (1997), points out two leading themes visible throughout the diaries, "the imperative of artistic creativity and an incessant thirst for life, the need for strong impressions" (Laitinen 1997: 569). Aino Kallas herself has explained the need to keep a diary in the following way: "Incessant self-observation, characteristic of keeping a diary, noticing and recording each movement of my soul and each incident belong naturally to my uttermost being" (Kallas 1994: 5–6).

In 1899, after having consented to marry Oskar Kallas, Aino Kallas notes in her diary: "Aino Krohn has to go, to disappear from this world. Aino Suonio<sup>1</sup> — The God being generous — will

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<sup>1</sup> This was the pen name of Aino Kallas when she was single.

stay. The fact that I can write in Finnish in the future as well and be somebody for my old homeland makes it easier for me to leave" (Kallas 1994: 160). Marrying a foreigner and leaving Finland was a decision of crucial importance in the life of Aino Kallas, the impact of which she was able to estimate only partially at the time. Here writing serves as a means for preserving cultural identity, later it also became a vehicle of assimilation into the Estonian life and culture, her investigations of the lives of many families in Saaremaa serving as one example. However, numerous later diary entries, mostly focusing on the literary career of Aino Kallas, discuss the tensions of being between cultures. The diary entry from June 24, 1929, commenting on the refusal of both Estonian and Finnish critics to recognise her as their writer reads: "My home has been in three countries but don't belong to any of them. /.../ I belong to the world." (Kallas 1996: 145). Cultural identification that is not a particularly burning issue in Woolf's diaries, was an issue of constant negotiation and inner debates for Aino Kallas. "Belonging to the world" here seems more to imply a feeling of homelessness than a celebration of cosmopolitanism.

However, the following diary entry that articulates the process of writing via a metaphor, also displays features of strong (also idealised) cultural identification with Finland:

The process of creating a work of art is like shaking cream in an empty champagne bottle until it finally turns into butter; how often I did this on the porch in Syrjä. First, there is liquid that then turns into small particles that finally join to form thick butter. But the shaking it takes! (Kallas 1996: 146), (July 04, 1929).

The process outlined in the last volume of the diaries of Aino Kallas makes a leap back in time to the pleasant summers of her girlhood spent at her family's summerhouse in Syrjä. It is interesting that Kallas uses a domestic metaphor for describing her writing process, although the task is described more like a playful and enjoyable activity rather than a boring household chore. In contrast to Woolf, for whom the whole process of creating a work of art was contained in a flow embracing the product and the



creator, Kallas here starts off with a substance lacking form and strives toward 'thickness' and solidity.

Interrelated with the theme of writing and artistic self-realisation is an ongoing quest for emotional intensity in her relationships with other people, especially with men. Many pages of her diary are dedicated to the contemplation of passion, and the search and necessity for 'the love of her life'. In her everyday life, the moments of privacy that she often felt were stolen from her family, nonetheless were a source of great satisfaction for her: "Yesterday, I wrote with great joy. The happiness that at last I could create something was so intense that no everyday problems could spoil it. When I write, I live" (Kallas 1993: 7), (April 01, 1916). These moments also contributed to the understanding that oftentimes her creative capacities had to lay latent for long periods and that her husband, despite all his devotion, was unable to entirely share her interests or to serve as an inspiration to her.

Well aware of the difference between her and her female contemporaries, Aino Kallas asks: "How many women are content with giving birth to children and bringing them up, why isn't it enough for me? Why do I have this unattainable yearning?" Kallas 1994: 231), (November 10, 1902). In the first volume of her diaries Kallas also mentions the mental ineptitude of most Estonian middle-class and upper middle-class women she met and complains about their narrow circle of interests focused on petty domestic intrigues and gossip instead of promoting Estonian culture. Apart from her friend Ilona Jalava and some female relatives, Aino Kallas hardly mentions any women with whom she felt anything in common. All her intellectual and spiritual bonds were exclusively with other men: Jaan Tõnisson, Juhan Luiga, Gustav Suits, later Jan Rosenthal and Eino Leino.

The conflict between her role and duties as a mother and her inner needs as an artist constitute one of the major points of tension in the diaries of Aino Kallas, emerging most clearly in the volumes covering the years when the children were still small. In a most dramatic manner the conflict is articulated in the following excerpt, written after the fourth child of Aino and Oskar Kallas was born with a severe physical handicap:

I showed Oskar the folder where I kept the manuscript of my almost finished novel: "The reason is — another child —, I whispered — my mental child". The first idea that came to my head was that I alone was to blame for what had happened, because I had wished to carry simultaneously two children. Because my brainchild took all my mental powers, the other was born a little idiot, a tiny handicapped creature" (Kallas 1994: 267), (July 10, 1906).

If using the childbirth metaphor when referring to her works can be seen as a mere literary device for Virginia Woolf, Aino Kallas drew an almost literal parallel between her work and her baby after their fourth child, who only lived for three days, was born retarded. Her husband, Oskar Kallas, is depicted in the episode as a generous, loving, and kind man who puts no blame on his wife. Aino Kallas has depicted the doubtlessly very sad event in their lives through a stereotypical home/children versus creative self-realisation dichotomy. Biographical records concerning that period that coincide with diary entries indicate that Aino Kallas had to handle a considerable workload related to childcare and domestic work, yet she herself never even considers other factors that might have contributed to the tragic event. However, the diary of Aino Kallas also contains examples of a reverse process. In the last volume of her diaries, overwhelmed by the outbreak of a fit of mental illness of her youngest son Hillar and by the collapse of the marriage and the subsequent breakdown of her younger daughter, Laine, she finds consolation in the thought of writing one more book: "The only thing I wish is to write one more book. (...) I need to utter the word that will outlive my mortal body".

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To put it figuratively, the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Aino Kallas, although rather dissimilar in style and content, cast certain light on some of the shadows out of which their literary works have emerged. Regardless of the fact that the act of publication makes both diaries subjects to norm and constitute a norm in itself, what clearly emerges from these works is that for both Woolf and

Kallas they functioned as sites of contestation, as possibilities for flexible and multiple identification. The diary pages of Virginia Woolf make visible a discourse that freely circulates between brief mentions of daily matters and sophisticated yet incoherent passages apparently written with an inner artistic standard in mind. The diary of Aino Kallas focuses on the clash of her identity as a mother and a wife, and that of an artist with strong emotional and intellectual desires. Although I could attempt a conclusion on the basis of the formulation of Aino Kallas' and Virginia Woolf's identities as (women) writers in their diaries, such a procedure, in my opinion, would force these texts whose main value I see in their fragmentariness and contradictions, toward an artificial closure that they inherently resist.

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## **Transgressions des tabous sexuels dans les romans féministes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, de l'Allemagne et de l'Autriche**

MOSÉ CHIMOUN

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Les transgressions des tabous sexuels, c'est-à-dire le fait de passer outre tous les interdits sur les questions de la sexualité et d'exposer sur la place publique tout ce qui jusque-là est tenu secret en matière de sexualité, constituent un thème fondamental dans les romans féministes en général et particulièrement chez ceux de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, de l'Allemagne et de l'Autriche. Dans les œuvres des romancières qui font l'objet de cette étude, à savoir les Nigérianes Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, la Ghanéenne Ama Ata Aidoo, la Sénégalaise Ken Bugul, les Camerounaises Calixthe Beyala, Lydie Dooh-Bunya, Werewere Liking, l'Allemande Verena Stefan et l'Autrichienne Karin Rick, les transgressions des tabous sexuels se manifestent au niveau des thèmes et de la manière de les exposer. Leur engagement ne se limite plus à la dénonciation des différents abus sociaux tels que le mariage précoce, la polygamie et les violences faites aux femmes au foyer. Elles s'attaquent énergiquement aux différentes pratiques sexuelles afin de mettre à nu le comportement phallocratique des hommes d'une part et, d'autre part, de banaliser toutes les règles sociales qui ont jusqu'ici fait de la sexualité une pratique sacrée. Nous essaierons donc de montrer comment elles dévoilent la vie intime entre l'homme et la femme afin d'en faire une union banale et à la limite absurde.

En Afrique de l'Ouest, c'est la Nigériane Buchi Emecheta qui, sans ambages, dès le début des années 70 dans son roman *Second-*

*Class Citizen* (Emecheta 1987),<sup>1</sup> donne le ton en remettant en question l'institution sacrée qu'est le mariage et les relations intimes qui en constituent l'expression. A propos du mariage, la narratrice déclare: "Marriage was not a bed of roses but a tunnel of thorns, fire and hot nails." (Emecheta 1980: 48) La protagoniste Adah ne se reconnaît pas dans cette alliance; cela se traduit aussi par le fait que les enfants issus de leur union sont la propriété de son mari; à cet effet, la narratrice rapporte: «She had to be there, bearing his children.» (Ib. 116) Buchi Emecheta est suivie dans sa logique de rejet du mariage par sa compatriote Flora Nwapa qui, dans son roman *One is Enough* (Nwapa 1981)<sup>2</sup>, déclare sans équivoque:

As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of my self.  
As a wife I am almost impotent. I am in prison,  
unable to advance in body and soul. Something gets  
of me as a wife and destroys me. (Ib.76)

Pour Flora Nwapa, le mariage dans sa version phallocratique est incompatible avec l'épanouissement de la femme. Lydie Dooh-Bunya est de même avis lorsqu'elle qualifie l'acte de mariage «d'acte de vente» dans son roman *La brise du jour* (1977: 10). Delphine Zanga Tsogo à travers son personnage Edanga, un polygame, dans son roman *Vies des femmes*, remet en question le mariage en ces termes: «Il [Edanga] se demanda si le mariage n'était pas sclérosant, et ne constituait qu'une occasion de gâcher des dons de générosité dont disposent les individus.» (1983: 85) Quant à Calixthe Beyala dans son œuvre *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales*, la vie d'une femme avec un homme est un «vrai chemin de croix» (1995: 30) car elle doit supporter tout ce qu'il y a de négatif chez l'homme:

L'époux qui baise mal, qui pue des pieds, a une  
haleine d'hyène, bouffe comme un cochon, se plaint  
de ses hémorroïdes, de sa constipation. /.../ Le travail  
de Monsieur, la chemise de Monsieur, le patron de  
Monsieur, tous les bobos de Monsieur, qui nous

<sup>1</sup> Toutes nos références sont tirées de cette édition.

<sup>2</sup> Toutes nos références sont tirées de cette édition.



hachent les nerfs et nous dévorent de l'intérieur. (Beyala 1995: 30)

En nous appuyant sur ces témoignages, nous constatons que le mariage qui, aussi bien dans la tradition africaine que dans celle judéo-chrétienne, est jusque-là perçu comme un instrument de pérennisation de l'espèce humaine, donne lieu à des contestations de la part des femmes, car, la manière dont les relations intimes sont conçues et exécutées par les hommes ne prend pas en compte leurs exigences.

Dans l'œuvre de Buchi Emecheta, Francis, le mari d'Adah, est le prototype du sauvage dans l'expression de ses instincts sexuels; à ce propos, la narratrice rapporte qu'une fois, Adah osa refuser de faire l'amour avec lui, il se comporta «like an enraged bull /.../ He thundered, shaking Adah brutally by the shoulders.» (Emecheta 1980: 94) Les termes de comparaison «bull» et «thundered» illustrent l'expression d'une force brute. Cette manière d'agir qui traduit la négation de l'existence de la partenaire, déclenche chez Adah un sentiment de rejet qui se manifeste par une description grossière du sexe de Francis:

His sex was inside these baggy trousers, dangling this way and that like the pendulum of Big-Ben. /.../ It dangled much more furiously now, this way, that way, and back again, because he was excited. (Ib.109)

Le fait de livrer au public des détails sur le sexe de l'homme, et surtout par une femme, est un acte inimaginable dans la tradition africaine. Plus que Buchi Emecheta, Werewere Liking dans *Elle sera de Jaspe et de Corail* (1983)<sup>3</sup> tient des propos très crus lorsqu'elle décrit en quelques mots le sexe de Grozi après une scène d'autosatisfaction sexuelle: «Grozi s'est encore masturbé. Et le voici à nouveau la queue-devant basse molle une goutte honteuse pendouille là hésitante: tombera, tombera pas...» (Ib.11) Cette description grossière du sexe de l'homme et de ce qui en sort est une manière de démystifier ce que ce dernier considère comme objet de sa suprématie sur la femme. Il s'agit en quelque sorte pour

<sup>3</sup> Toutes nos références sont tirées de cette édition.

elle d'en finir avec ce qu'elle appelle «la pourriture de la civilisation macho qui a régné depuis tant de siècles et qui voit tout en phallus». (Ib. 66) Fort de son sexe, l'homme devient orgueilleux et se croit indispensable. A ce propos, Werewere Liking précise que les hommes sont convaincus que «leur seul phallus suffit à tout compenser: la pauvreté intérieure et extérieure la petitesse de vue et d'action la laideur bassesse...» (Ib.150) A travers tout le texte, on relève un vocabulaire impudique qui ne brise pas seulement le tabou, mais frise une haine pouvant conduire au meurtre contre l'homme. C'est ainsi qu'elle donne une image triste de l'homme et met en relief l'agressivité de son sexe à travers les expressions suivantes: «pauvre con...» (17), «bande d'incirconcis» (118), «la queue-devant basse molle», (11,12,27) «phallus dressé» (66), «brandir un sexe phallique» (144). Son aversion pour l'hétérosexualité se traduit par des expressions assez choquantes: «les femmes (...) sucent les larves, (...) elles lèchent les limaces et les culs des pédés»(75), «les hommes déversent dans leurs femmes»(87), «gémir sous des sexes sans couilles»(89). Cette démarche de Werewere Liking traduit sa conception sur le féminisme. Elle déclare à ce propos au cours d'une interview: «Je suis une misovire (...) C'est une misogynie (...) au féminin.» (Sennen 1983: 69) Pour elle, l'homme est l'adversaire de toutes les beautés et choses agréables, quelqu'un de peu convainquant et sur qui on ne peut pas compter. Le fait de ridiculiser les relations entre l'homme et la femme est une manière de faire comprendre à la femme que c'est bien elle qui donne l'occasion aux hommes d'adopter un comportement sexiste à leur égard. (Ib.)

Cette manière de traiter les relations entre l'homme et la femme par l'usage des termes négatifs et à la limite injurieux sera relayé plus tard par Calixthe Beyala dans *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales*. Elle utilise tous les qualificatifs qui frisent l'obscénité pour mettre en relief l'aversion qu'elle a pour les hommes: tantôt elle les traite de «faux-culs» (41), de «phallocrate» (70), de «couilles molles» (117), tantôt de «sous-larves» (95), de «zob» ou de «macho» (50). Pour mieux mettre en exergue sa haine contre l'homme, elle présente son sexe comme un objet saillant au-dessous duquel pendent une paire de couilles; le sexe ainsi peint est à l'origine de la laideur de l'homme: «Cela ne doit pas être

évident de trimballer à la fois des couilles et un pénis, /.../ j'imagine que c'est encombrant.» (49–150) Alors que Werewere Liking et Calixthe Beyala s'efforcent à dénoncer l'hétérosexualité, Buchi Emecheta par contre ne remet en cause que la manière dont elle est exécutée. C'est ainsi que dans *Double Yoke* (Emecheta 1984), elle présente la première rencontre charnelle entre le jeune couple Ete Kamba et Nko en ces termes:

He bore on her, unceremoniously half pushed and half dragged her towards the walls of this unfinished house, then right to a corner inside. He was determined. He had squared his shoulders ready to combat any protest, but none came. For once Nko allowed him to touch, to fondle and to know her. She allowed him, she gave in, and she gave him all, her body yielding, responding to his demands, his thirst, his hunger. /.../ She was exhilarating, she was a bundle of soft tender, warm flesh, very young, very moist, not very difficult. /.../ She started to wilt. Her legs became weak. Ete Kamba /.../ gave her one of his now fast becoming familiar, long near crumbling kisses. (Ib. 57)

Cette description met en relief l'expression de domination de la part du jeune homme et celle de souplesse et de tendresse voire de soumission du côté de la jeune fille. D'où une fois de plus, le manque de considération pour la femme dans l'hétérosexualité. Il se dégage aussi dans le passage une banalisation de l'amour, car les deux amants sont debout dans une maison en construction et dans la nuit noire. Le cadre ne présente aucune sécurité, aucun confort; ils ne se soucient pas de l'hygiène. L'instinct sexuel et la passion ont pris le dessus sur toute considération humaine. La conséquence de ce comportement est la violation de la tradition, car l'acte sexuel ne doit se faire qu'après le consentement des deux familles suivi de la célébration traditionnelle du mariage. La question de virginité est reléguée au second plan, alors qu'elle est la condition à remplir par une fille pour être donnée ou acceptée en mariage. Cela est un signe de rupture brutale avec la tradition. Mais le jeune Ete Kamba, malgré cet exploit qui normalement



traduit son évolution vers la mentalité occidentale, c'est-à-dire la banalisation de la sexualité, revient sur la question de virginité lorsqu'il demande à Nko: «You are not a Virgin, are you?» (Ib. 61) Ironiquement, Nko répond en ces termes: «Why ask that now? It is so important?» (Ib.) Pour Nko, il est tard de se poser cette question, l'acte étant déjà consommé; en plus, Ete Kamba n'a pas raison de s'occuper seul de ce problème de virginité. Dans la tradition africaine, c'est dans un contexte de grande cérémonie de mariage que cette affaire est réglée. Ete Kamba en se démarquant de la tradition par cet acte de tricherie, ne peut qu'assumer les conséquences.

La banalisation de la sexualité se poursuit dans *Double Yoke* par l'usage du sexe comme moyen de pression et d'exploitation de l'homme. L'expression «bottom power» (ib.140) qui traduit la philosophie du pouvoir du sexe, n'est autre chose qu'un euphémisme désignant la prostitution: Nko qui sort avec Elder Ikot, chef du Département d'Anglais à l'Université, exige une meilleure note qu'elle traduit par l'expression «a First class honours degree». (Ib.139) Pour elle, il faut utiliser son corps pour se faire une place dans la société. Cette conception, quoique non conforme à l'éthique généralement admise dans toutes les sociétés, est également partagée par la Nigériane Flora Nwapa dans *One is Enough*. Amaka, le personnage principal, fuit son mari au village et se rend à Lagos (Nigeria) où elle rejoint une association des prostituées légalement reconnue. Dans sa vie de débauchée, elle réussit à séduire un prêtre catholique du nom de Maclaid. L'une de leurs rencontres charnelles est décrite comme suit:

She caressed him, she touched him in forbidden places, and he was aroused. They made love again. Amaka succeeded in tempting him as she said she could. She was going to play her cards very well. It was the first time in her life that she had planned the total annihilation of a man, using all that her mother taught her, which she had sadly neglected because the spinster missionaries had taught otherwise. (Nwapa 1981: 78-79 )

La violation de la morale est évidente dans cet épisode: Amaka qui n'a pas encore divorcé se permet de commettre l'adultère et de surcroît avec un prêtre catholique, un homme de Dieu qui a opté pour la chasteté pendant toute sa vie. Elle reconnaît qu'elle est en train de pécher lorsqu'elle déclare que l'acte qu'elle pose avait été interdit par les premiers missionnaires dont la chasteté constituait le credo de leur vie. Amaka, tout en se forgeant une image conforme à la société dépravée de Lagos, plonge par contre le prêtre dans l'impasse; ce dernier doit alors démissionner de sa congrégation, car Amaka proclame tout haut qu'il est le père des jumeaux qu'elle vient de mettre au monde. A son amie Adaobi, elle déclare: «Father Mclaid is the father of my twins ...» (Ib.138) Le choc est assez grand dans la communauté; c'est ainsi qu'Adaobi lui répond sur un ton amer:

You Amaka, you of all people. You, how could you tempt a man of God? A priest of God, vowed to be celibate. How could you ? I don't know you could do that. Oh, I am disappointed in you. (Ib.137)

Les femmes ne connaissent plus de limites dans l'expression de leurs sentiments intimes. Rien n'est plus tenu en secret. Même les actes répréhensibles sont aujourd'hui considérés comme des exploits. Ces agissements sont même cautionnés par les vieux du village: dans *Double Yoke*, le jeune Ete Kamba, qui fait l'amour avec sa petite amie Nko dans une maison en construction et dans la nuit noire, est félicité par son père en ces termes: «My son, I am happy today. congratulations, son. /.../ I am sure she was warm and yielding. Lucky girl, with a young man like you.» (Emecheta 1984: 58) Le père qui devait se comporter en gardien de la tradition, se permet non seulement d'apprécier l'acte posé, mais de converser avec son fils à ce sujet; ce qui est inconcevable dans la tradition africaine. Le tabou est une fois brisé lorsque Ngbeke dans *The Bride Price* (Emecheta 1979) raconte ceci à ses enfants: «I am the woman who taught your father what a woman tastes like. I disvirgined your father and your father disvirgined me. And I gave birth to you.» (Ib. 76)

Nous constatons que la violation de la morale se manifeste dans les actes et les paroles. Tout ce qui se fait, même en cachette, est

raconté à la place publique. C'est en suivant cet esprit que Nko dans *Double Yoke* ne se gêne pas lorsqu'elle raconte à ses camarades les conditions dans lesquelles elle a été dévirginisée: «We did it by a wall, and he wanted enough blood to float his whole village.» (Emecheta 1984: 151) Toujours à cette même occasion, l'une des étudiantes, insistant sur la préservation de sa virginité, raconte tout de même à ses camarades qu'elle a été violée à l'âge de six ans par un domestique dans la maison paternelle; alors une d'entre elle de lui signifier qu'elle n'est plus vierge en ces termes: «How can you bleed, when you've probably burst the blood bag before it was ready. You are preserving nothing.» (Ib. 153) Elle ne se limite pas à cette mise au point; elle l'encourage à forniquer avec un étudiant allemand: «Let your boyfriend — the German boy doing Tropical Medicine, is that him ... well try it with him.» (Ib.) En encourageant la camarade à avoir un partenaire sexuel européen, les filles en profitent pour étaler leur connaissance sur la morphologie du sexe des Européens; elle raconte ceci: «Many of those white men are not circumcised, so they hang down like wet intestines. Hughgh.» (Ib.) Les étudiantes expriment ainsi leurs expériences avec les Européens et extériorisent de ce fait la liberté sexuelle qui les anime.

Nous constatons que rien ne sera plus jamais comme avant: que ce soit entre les jeunes et les adultes ou bien entre les jeunes, la conversation est directe. Il n'y a plus d'interdit dans le domaine sexuel.

Dans *Our Sister Killjoy* d'Ama Ata Aidoo, il se pose le problème de lesbisme, c'est-à-dire la liaison amoureuse entre deux femmes: Sessie, la jeune ghanéenne se rend en Bavière (Allemagne) et fait la connaissance de Marija, une jeune bavaroise mariée et mère d'un enfant. Alors que Sessie se fait une idée des relations d'amitié pures et sincères, Marija voit en elle une partenaire sexuelle. C'est ainsi que dans la chambre de Marija, Sessie fait l'objet des attouchements qui traduisent les intentions amoureuses de Marija. Cette rencontre charnelle est rapportée comme suit:

The room indeed looked as if it was cut out of a giant rock. /.../ A giant white bed, laid out smooth, waiting



to be use. /.../ Sessie felt Marija's cold fingers on her breast. The fingers of Marija's hand touched the skin of Sissie's breast while her other hand groped round and round Sissie's midriff, searching for something to hold on. It was her left hand that woke up to the reality of Marija's embrace. The warmth of her tears on her neck. The hotness of her lips against hers. (Aidoo 1996: 63-64 )

Le phénomène d'homosexualité ne se limite pas seulement en Allemagne, la romancière Ken Bugul dans *Le baobab fou* relate (1997) d'autres cas à Bruxelles (Belgique): la protagoniste anonyme rapporte de manière crue les penchants homosexuels de son ami Werner en ces termes:

... c'est lié à mon enfance, j'aime être avec les hommes. /.../ j'ai des tendances homosexuelles. /.../ j'ai besoin de l'affection, de la tendresse d'un homme. Quand je suis avec un homme, je me fonds dans son étreinte sans aller plus loin. C'est chez moi un besoin de tendresse. Si je ne suis pas rentré hier soir, c'est que j'ai passé la nuit avec un homme». (Bugul 1997: 72)

Werner a mené auparavant une vie bisexuelle à Bruxelles car il « avait été marié, avait des enfants. » (Ib.) Divorcé, il est obligé de nouer des relations d'amitié avec la protagoniste anonyme afin de pouvoir masquer sa nature homosexuelle. En faisant cette déclaration, il défie l'ordre établi, c'est-à-dire la pratique de l'hétérosexualité qui doit être acceptée par toutes les couches sociales exceptés les prêtres catholiques qui sont tenus d'observer la chasteté. Mais Ken Bugul fait aussi une incursion dans le milieu confessionnel à travers son personnage Souleymane qui révèle une triste réalité courante au sein du clergé catholique: la pratique de l'homosexualité. Il raconte à la protagoniste ses mésaventures dans la chambre que lui avait trouvée un curé comme suit:

Ma sœur, tu sais, le père supérieur est venu me voir le soir dans ma chambre m'apportant un collant pour ne pas prendre froid et il m' a demandé s'il pouvait passer la nuit avec moi. Cela m'a semblé bizarre et

étonnant que le père veuille dormir avec moi dans la chambre. Je ne comprenais pas, et quand il me demanda de faire l'amour avec lui, je bondis de frayeur et faillis le frapper.» (Ib.107)

Cette expression de l'amour charnelle contraste aussi bien avec la conception traditionnelle en Afrique qu'avec la morale de l'Eglise catholique romaine en vigueur dans toute la Bavière et la Belgique. C'est ce qui explique d'ailleurs la vie bisexuelle que mène aussi bien Marija que Werner. Dans la société conservatrice de la Bavière, Marija n'ose pas décliner son penchant pour le lesbianisme; il en est de même pour Werner à Bruxelles. Cette frustration que connaissent les lesbiennes et les homosexuels est également vécue par celles et ceux de l'Autriche, un autre pays voisin de la Bavière où les hommes et les femmes sont pétris par la morale de l'Eglise catholique romaine. C'est ainsi que dans *Côte d'Azur* (1993) de Karin Rick, il est question de deux lesbiennes qui doivent s'exiler en France, à la Côte d'Azur, pour pouvoir vivre librement et intensément leur amour. La France, contrairement à l'Autriche et à la Belgique, se présente comme un pays de liberté, un pays où il n'est plus question de tabous sexuels. C'est ainsi que la narratrice et personnage principal décrit cet univers où elles vivent leur amour en ces termes:

A présent, je suis dans un univers dans lequel je ne peux rien faire d'autre que de toucher, de caresser et d'embrasser son corps en me réveillant le matin. Et ce corps est comme un prolongement, une extension, un agrandissement du mien. Il n'y a aucune possibilité d'en être rassasiée.» (Ib.15)

Contrairement à Vienne, la Côte d'Azur se présente alors comme un lieu de licence par excellence. Il est donc à remarquer qu'il est difficile d'appliquer des interdits lorsque tout le monde ne sent pas la nécessité d'en faire autant. Le fait de tolérer le lesbianisme dans certains pays voisins de l'Autriche comme la France a fini par ébranler la société autrichienne: les romancières comme Karin Rick expriment aujourd'hui librement leur lesbianisme; les rues sont régulièrement occupées par des manifestant(e)s qui militent pour la reconnaissance des homosexuel(le)s. Si en Autriche on se bat

encore pour ce droit, des pays comme la France, la Hollande sont en avance: en Hollande, des mariages entre les homosexuels sont officiellement célébrés; en France, des dispositions allant dans ce sens sont en bonne voie. Il faut cependant reconnaître que les romancières allemandes ont joué un rôle déterminant dans la transgression de ce tabou sexuel qu'est le lesbianisme en particulier et l'homosexualité en général. Verena Stefan fut la toute première à en faire un thème des débats publics à travers son roman *Häutungen* (1985). Il y est question d'une jeune femme qui raconte comment elle est passée de l'hétérosexualité à l'homosexualité; elle invite d'autres femmes à faire cette expérience douloureuse mais salvatrice au bout de compte. Pour elle, la libération de la femme passe par la négation de l'hétérosexualité. C'est ainsi qu'elle déclare: «Ma personne m'est plus importante que l'union avec le pénis.» (Ib.73) Il faut comprendre que, lorsque Verena Stefan parle d'elle, elle parle aussi d'autres femmes; en d'autres termes, toute femme devait accorder plus d'importance à sa propre vie qu'à une quelconque union avec un homme. La vie ici comprend tout: la sexualité et toute autre forme de partenariat entre l'homme et la femme. L'homme doit être exclu du champ visuel de toute femme. C'est cette vision des relations entre l'homme et la femme qui a été reprise autrement par les Camerounaises Calixthe Beyala et Werewere Liking telle que nous l'avons développée un peu plus haut. Toutes ces prises de position ont trouvé un écho favorable dans les milieux des femmes. En Allemagne, le roman de Verena Stefan a connu un grand succès; il a été reconnu par Renate Just comme «Bible du mouvement féministe.» (Just 1976)

Si aujourd'hui le lesbianisme est devenu une affaire banale qui ne choque plus personne, il y a lieu de comprendre pourquoi l'adultère qui est un phénomène social bien connu depuis des temps immémoriaux est devenu la chose la mieux partagée par tous et toutes dans nos sociétés. Calixthe Beyala en fait tout de même un thème principal dans son roman *Maman a un amant* (1993). Maryam, la femme d'Abdou, sort avec Etienne Tichit tout simplement parce qu'elle n'est pas sexuellement satisfaite. Abdou ignore l'art de faire l'amour, c'est-à-dire les caresses précopulatoires, car dans sa mentalité traditionnelle, les relations



intimes ont pour but la procréation; et comme la sexualité féminine est un sujet tabou en Afrique, sa femme n'ose pas en parler avec lui; mais avec son amant français, ils en discutent sans gêne et aboutissent à une satisfaction mutuelle. Calixthe Beyala arrive donc à mettre sur la place publique l'une des causes de l'adultère chez les femmes. En muselant les femmes dans le domaine sexuel, on les pousse à recourir à l'illégalité pour exprimer leurs désirs.

Il est donc évident que rien n'est plus tenu en secret dans le domaine sexuel aussi bien en Afrique que dans le monde germanophone. En Afrique de l'Ouest, les changements sont trop brusques et cela grâce aux médias dont le principal vecteur est la télévision avec des films érotiques dont la diffusion ne respecte aucune déontologie, les revues pornographiques qui foisonnent dans les kiosques des villes africaines, les touristes sexuels qui peuplent les plages populaires et dont le corollaire est le tournage des films pornographiques dans les night-clubs tenus par des Européens (Bâ 2000: 9), la pauvreté qui favorise une promiscuité indescriptible dans les bidons-villes des grandes citées africaines. Il serait aujourd'hui absurde de parler encore de tabou sexuel. Face à cette situation, les romancières ont pris leurs responsabilités en introduisant cette problématique dans la fiction afin de mieux canaliser les énergies. Il faut voir dans cette production littéraire une certaine volonté de la part des romancières de jouer le rôle d'éclaireur et partant de cela, de maintenir la littérature dans sa fonction d'instrument didactique.

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## Eros et Thanatos dans *Le Visage Émerveillé* d'Anna de Noailles

VASSILIKI LALAGIANNI

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Connue aujourd'hui comme poète, Anna de Noailles fut aussi une romancière. Au début du siècle elle avait publié *La Nouvelle Espérance* (1903), *Le Visage Émerveillé* (1904) et *La Domination* (1905). Elle a brusquement mis fin à sa carrière de romancière après sa déception due aux critiques négatives qui ont vu le jour dans la presse après la publication de *La Domination*. Ces romans contiennent une unité thématique qui parcourt toute son oeuvre: le désir profond de se libérer des normes de la moralité traditionnelle à travers la quête de l'Eros. En s'opposant au courant misogyne de l'époque, elle s'inspire de l'amoralisme nietzschéen pour s'attaquer à la notion de la femme "naturelle" qui, dans son effort d'imiter l'intellect, qui lui fait défaut, s'oppose à la "nature" soutient Baudelaire<sup>1</sup>; écrivain de la Belle Époque, Noailles remet en cause "les valeurs traditionnelles du bien et du mal, en tant qu'elles se rapportent à la sexualité et au désir des femmes, annonçant ainsi une révolte qui s'intensifiera au cours du siècle (Perry 1998: 277). La quête de l'amour charnel,<sup>2</sup> jamais accomplie,

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<sup>1</sup> Il s'agit d'une vue courante pendant la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, celle de la femme "naturelle, donc abominable" selon une sentence très connue de Baudelaire ("Mon cœur mis à nu", *Oeuvres*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 1980, p. 406). Cette sentence se trouve à l'origine, d'une vague de misogynie dans les textes d'écrivains décadents.

<sup>2</sup> Noailles ne se réfère jamais dans ses écrits à l'amour maternel qui est totalement absent de ses trois romans, même d'*Octave*, son roman inachévé. Catherine Perry constate qu' "à part deux cas exceptionnels



conduit l'héroïne noaillienne à la mélancolie accablante, à la frustration, aux névroses et, parfois, au suicide. Ces romans miroitent, également, la vie sentimentale de l'écrivain puisque de Noailles, comme toutes ses héroïnes, a fini ses jours comme une névrosée, clouée sur le lit qu'elle refusait d'abandonner, dans sa chambre à coucher où elle lisait ses livres et recevait ses amis (Mignot-Ogliastri 1986: 380).

Dans le *Visage Émerveillé*, le roman le plus étrange<sup>3</sup> de Noailles, la volupté et la mort cohabitent dans un couvent qui, à la fois sacré et profane, attire, comme un aimant, les êtres déçus, désespérés et fatigués de leur vie. Des souvenirs traumatisants caractérisent ces femmes qui entrent dans la vie cloîtrée. Soeur Colette, après son unique expérience sentimentale avec le mari de sa soeur, expie cette aventure derrière les murs blancs du couvent. Les traumatismes psychiques de l'enfance et les souvenirs nocifs d'un échec amoureux ont poussé Soeur Sophie au couvent. La mère-abbesse s'est orientée vers le couvent dans le but d'y ensevelir un amour perdu. Se consacrer à la vie monastique apparaît chez Noailles comme un acte manqué. Tout au long du *Visage Émerveillé* le problème qui hante les religieuses est celui du mal lié à la conscience morale. Il arrive que ce dilemme de la conscience soit tellement fort qu'il aboutit à un conflit psychique. L'oscillation entre la pureté et le péché, et la privation, à la fin, de toute satisfaction sentimentale ou physique, causent chez Soeur Sophie un état de frustration dont elle ne peut pas s'échapper. Le renoncement à l'amour charnel et l'empêchement de toute

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de poèmes adressés à son fils, Noailles, contrairement à d'autres femmes poètes de l'époque, ne fait aucune référence dans ses écrits aux fonctions traditionnelles de la femme, tandis que sa correspondance témoigne amplement d'un amour conjugal et maternel." (Perry 1997: 75-89)

<sup>3</sup> Proust considérait que le *Visage Émerveillé* était un roman à clef et il a relevé certains parallélismes avec la vie de Noailles: le couvent était une école religieuse à Evian, la chapelle était la petite église du château Champlâtreux, propriété de la belle-mère du poète, la mère-abbesse n'était que la grande amie de Noailles, Madame Bulteau (cf. V. Lalagianni, *Anna de Noailles et le monde sensible*, Doctorat Nouveau Régime, Metz, 1989: 118).

décharge affective conduisent la mère-abbesse à mener une vie érotique latente, une sorte d'*aphanisis* intense. Qu'elles soient déjà anémiées avant d'entrer au couvent ou qu'elles aient perdu leur vitalité une fois enfermées dans ces tombeaux que sont les monastères, il est évident que l'évasion reste le seul moyen de revivifier ces fantômes que sont les religieuses. La solitude est intolérable à qui n'a pas fait à Dieu seul le don authentique de sa vie. Tout au long de ce roman on a l'impression que la claustration étouffe les nonnes et que les maladies nerveuses planent sur le couvent. Ainsi la relation de Soeur Sophie avec Julien qui entre dans le couvent et, comme un virus, inocule la maladie de l'amour et supprime toute pureté, n'était-elle qu'une explosion sentimentale dans la vie solitaire et ennuyeuse de la nonne, un moyen de s'évader de la vie monotone de tous les jours.

La sexualité nocive et refoulée des religieuses choisit comme mécanisme de défense, les travaux quotidiens dans le couvent. L'attitude énergique de soeur Marthe est chargée de significations psychanalytiques: en travaillant durement, elle se prive de tout fantasme. La nature rêveuse de Soeur Sophie indique que l'onirisme est encore un mécanisme de fuite. Le rêve mousse l'acuité du conflit moral et fait oublier tous les problèmes psychiques.

Lieu propice au rêve, et par conséquent, à l'évasion, le jardin n'est jamais innocent chez Noailles.<sup>4</sup> Quand Soeur Sophie note dans son journal intime: "Hier, je caressais de beaux glaïeuls, frais et pressés dans leur haute cosse luisante"(Noailles 1904: 115)<sup>5</sup>, les implications freudiennes sont évidentes. Il y a dans le *Visage Émerveillé* une scène dans laquelle chaque religieuse décrit minutieusement son fruit préféré. Des fruits à forme féminine et à substance juteuse attaquent le regard, défient les lèvres et échauffent l'imagination. Soeur Sophie préfère "l'abricot, qu'on imagine complètement avant d'y mordre, et qu'on mange avec une telle douceur de perfection, que ce sont, dès que mes lèvres le touchent, de beaux baisers et de beaux soupirs dans un fruit"(V.E.,

<sup>4</sup> Sur le jardin/espace chez Noailles, voir Bargenda, 1995: 167–212 et sur le jardin/sacré, voir V. Lalagianni, *Anna de Noailles et le monde sensible*, op.cit.,chap. "Lieux hiérophaniques", pp. 225–237.

<sup>5</sup> Abrégé dans le texte et les notes: V.E.

115–116). Les fruits reçoivent dans ce passage une charge affective et même libidinale (Lalagianni 1998: 12) Leur chair, molle et tendre, participe à une sensualité de tendresse liquide, élaborée; c'est une sensualité qui exclut toute violence et réclame une pénétration, un envahissement, basés sur un fantasme passif d'inondation. La description des fruits élargit la résonance vers un érotisme différencé; une silhouette masculine (ou féminine) se cache dans la pulpe des fruits; ces "beaux soupirs dans un fruit" ne sont que les soupirs des lèvres qui s'approchent, des baisers sonnants qui rompent le silence morbide du couvent. La métamorphose de l'aliment (chair rouge → provocation → morsure → "fraîcheur fondante" → inondation → absorption) produit celle du corps et s'accompagne d'un sentiment d'euphorie, de puissance, de possession qui établit clairement la liaison du nutritionnel et du sexuel.<sup>6</sup>

C'est à travers l'acte nutritionnel que les nonnes essaient de s'évader *extra-muros*. Le biais de l'imagination constitue une issue pour la sexualité et l'affectivité frustrée des religieuses. Dans le *Visage Émerveillé* les désirs refoulés s'expriment sous forme de fantasmes, de rêves, d'actes manqués. Poussées par leur psychisme maladif, les nonnes de Noailles cherchent soit le contact humain soit, par le moyen de l'introversion, l'isolation extrême. La mère-abbesse décrit dans son journal intime ses fantasmes étranges, ses envies subconscientes où circule un attrait suggéré latent de nécrophilie et de lesbianisme.

Elles étaient mes petites cousines /.../ elles avaient quinze ans, seize ans, dix-sept ans. Elles m'aimaient /.../ Aujourd'hui, en revoyant dans mon coeur leurs tendres figures, je pense à ce que sera leur mort, si elles meurent jeunes. Jeunes femmes de vingt-cinq et de vingt-six ans, toujours petites filles, je pense à

<sup>6</sup> Les nombreuses références d'Anna de Noailles à la nourriture dans son *Autobiographie* montrent que l'acte nutritionnel constitue pour elle un moyen de communication considérable: "/.../ ce désir de happer, cette jouissance et la sournoise satisfaction de dissimuler en soi ce que l'on convoite et de s'en rendre propriétaire est certainement la formule de tout désir" (1976: 158–159).



vosre agonie inconnue. Du fond de vosre lit, réveillées au milieu de la nuit par un désespérant étouffement, et sentant que c'est vosre fin, accrochez-vous, à ceux qui vous entourent, des mains épouvantées, des regards qui se cramponnent, des yeux affreusement pressés /.../. Souhaiterez-vous de voir vosre petit enfant /.../ ou bien encore, la bouche fermée et les yeux pleins de folie, jetterez-vous des bras plus pathétiques que les clameurs vers celui que vous ne devez point nommer, /.../ qui est la force et la honte de vosre coeur, l'ami, le frère et véritable époux? O petites filles que j'ai aimées, connaissez-vous, à la minute de mourir, la mélancolie, une mélancolie plus épuisante que ne serait, par une blessure affreuse, la perte de tout vosre sang? (V.E., 139-142)

Les femmes qui habitent les fantasmes de la supérieure, sont étouffées dans leur pleine efflorescence. Enfance lointaine, perte de la virginité, maladie, souffrances physiques et morales, déception et péché, tout est mentionné dans la *thanatopsis* de la mère-abbesse (Allard 1973: 119-120). Le récit, à tous les échelons, est sanglant; le sang jaillit abondamment dans ce journal intime en faisant d'énormes taches sur les murs blancs du couvent. On dirait que la supérieure se rejouit de voir les jeunes corps agonisants mais toujours beaux. La nécrophilie latente du texte montre que pour la supérieure, la volupté passe par la mort.

Plusieurs passages du journal intime de Soeur Sophie témoignent de la liaison ambiguë de la nonne avec la mère-abbesse.<sup>7</sup> Elle y écrit:

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<sup>7</sup> G. Pinter (*Proust: The Later Years*, Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1965) écrit: "Les milieux lesbiens, célèbres pour leur bizarrerie et leur bienveillance, étaient de temps en temps, fréquentés par des écrivains distingués comme Mme de Noailles et Colette." (p. 327, extrait traduit par nous).

Dans la *Domination* la comtesse Albi et sa dame de compagnie Emilie, et dans *La Nouvelle Espérance* Marie et Sabine, témoignent d'un sensualisme saphique.

Si vous m'aviez donné une de vos larmes à boire, si vous m'aviez, un jour de chagrin, pressé contre vous de telle sorte que j'eusse été désormais votre petite fille secrète, ma vie serait encore éblouie de pureté, et la porte de votre chambre me troublerait comme si elle était toute en bois de santal, si odorant, que lorsque j'étais petite, il me faisait m' évanouir. (V.E., 106)

La tristesse et l'amour où sont-ils plus abondants que sur vos genoux? et cet air de passion /.../ où est-il plus fort que sur votre épaule recouverte du lourd manteau? (V.E., 195)

Et je mets autour de son poignet mes deux mains glacées, Je penche la tête, je pleure, elle embrasse mes cheveux (V.E., 181)

C'est dans ces scènes érotico-maternelles que la nonne cherche la protection et l'amour de la femme âgée: le "corps arômal", selon l'expression de J. Evola, de l'abbesse réveille les sens endormis de la nonne qui recherche *l'odor di femina* de sa supérieure."Ce soir j'ai vu pleurer la mère abbesse /.../. C'était comme si ses larmes fondaient dans ma bouche" (V.E., 25). Les larmes participent à un registre de *liquida voluptas* qui parcourt tout le roman. Le couvent du *Visage Émerveillé* est un pot qui contient à la fois la rosée du jardin, le sang du Christ crucifié, la résine du sapin et les larmes des nonnes. Le sang coule sans cesse dans le cloître: les stigmates sur les mains de soeur Catherine qui saignent, la croix avec son Christ saignant, la communion qui contient le sang du Christ. Un érotisme mystique autant chrétien que dionysiaque, se cache dans les paroles de Soeur Sophie qui reçoit avec boulimie, la communion: "Seigneur, je vous ouvre, à vous, ma conscience. Voyez, et venez dans ma bouche qui n'a pas de force" (V.E., 32). La soeur Catherine — la mystique du couvent, dont le corps se spiritualise à travers les noces du Christ, elle reçoit les stigmates comme "une marque trop forte, une servitude d'amour" — s'extasie devant le crucifix qu'elle adore car "il est maigre, saignant et blond" (V.E., 23). Le phénomène de l'incorporation se déroule ici: l'objet

fantasmatique (ici Jésus) se retrouve dans un état de nourriture, dévoré, mangé et conservé à l'intérieur de soi. "Il faut d'abord avoir soif" avait dit une autre mystique du sang, Catherine de Sienne. Pour la nonne du *Visage Émerveillé*, l'Eucharistie est un acte d'assimilation complète à celui dont elle boit le sang. Loin d'être victimale ou sadique, la symbolique du sang renvoie à celle de la Passion (le supplice du Christ) et à celle de la vie (la résurrection du Christ). Anna de Noailles était une obsédée du sang. Des nombreuses références dans son oeuvre autobiographique montrent que les stigmates, le crucifix et l'autel — lieu du sacrifice, donc relatif au sang — impressionnent l'écrivain et envahissent son imaginaire. Dans son ouvrage *Exactitudes* elle décrit une de ses visites très fréquentes au couvent des Clarisses: "/.../ qu'on approche de l'église, qu'on pousse la porte, et voici qu'éclate, immobile et dans le silence, la noble tragédie de l'amour indompté. Un autel, un crucifix, du sang, des larmes, un Dieu qui meurt." (Noailles 1930: 150). Dans le poème "La Messe de l'aurore à Venise", le corps sanglant du Christ devient séduisant et voluptueux, il attire les femmes de Venise: "Crucifix somptueux, Jésus des Byzantins,/ Quel miel verserez-vous à ces pauvres ardentes!". Soeur Sophie écrit dans son journal intime: "Même en dormant, j'ai un coeur amolli qui s'abandonne, j'ai les mains ouvertes. Je suis comme vous, Seigneur, sur votre croix." (V.E., 44). La croix, lieu de torture, devient ici un lieu de volupté; les mains ouvertes dans un geste d'accueil, les pommes retournées vers le haut pour recevoir l'amant céleste.

Après que Julien a fait saigner, moralement et physiquement soeur Sophie, la fin de leur relation commence. L'opposition Amor / Bien, Eros / Mal a conduit à éliminer l'obstacle du corps. Soeur Sophie en obéissant à la discipline *perinde ac cadaver* de la Supérieure, finit sa vie comme une enterrée vivante, une sorte de Paulina qui expie son péché dans un couvent-tombeau. Pour la nonne, le "Sôma Sêma" pythagoricien devient un principe de vie. En 20 Septembre elle écrit dans son journal intime: "J'ai pris froid, je suis un peu malade. Vous m'avez envoyé cette fatigue pour me sanctifier, Seigneur. Je vous remercie, vous me sauvez. Mon âme n'a plus son profane emportement, je me guéris de ma violence." (V.E., 96). Quelques jours après, la supérieure confesse à



Soeur Sophie: "Je marche maintenant vers la tombe, je m'étonne qu'une flèche nouvelle puisse percer un coeur qui est tout entier brisé." (V.E., 174). La mort plane sur le couvent; outre la mort physique (la mort de soeur Catherine, celle de la mère de soeur Marthe, de l'ex-amant de la supérieure /.../, la mort morale est omni-présente dans le cloître. Toutes les soeurs sont plongées dans un état morbide. On pourrait dire qu'il s'agit d'un roman de chute. Il commence au printemps et finit en automne. Le cycle de Perséphone influence le couvent: la fécondité de soeur Sophie (vue comme corps et esprit) commence au printemps avec l'apparition de Julien; en automne, sa disparition provoque la sécheresse complète: la mélancolie, la maladie, les angoisses apparaissent; la chute finale commence. Tout apparaît chaste et imprégné de pureté au début du roman; tout finit par être impur et attaché à la matière. Le roman commence avec le nom du Seigneur; Jésus constitue, dans la pensée théologique, la personnification de la Vie, sa mort ne servant qu' à sa victoire finale, la Résurrection. C'est avec le nom de la Vierge Marie que le roman finit. D'après le dogme chrétien, la Mère de Dieu n'est pas divine mais seulement bienheureuse. En outre, en tant que matrice, elle représente la terre féconde et obscure. A la fin du roman, c'est la matière que l'emporte sur l'esprit, la chute est définitive (Allard 1973: 149 ).

Le cloître du *Visage Émerveillé* comme tout cloître chez Noailles, est un lieu où les pulsions d'Eros s'affrontent avec les pulsions de Thanatos. Et c'est l'obsession de la chair, l'Eros déchaîné, qui est vaincu à la fin du roman. "Le Visage Émerveillé", écrit Maurice Barrès, "est un hommage aux idées de subordination, de discipline et de tradition, puisqu'on y voit un jeune être chez qui d'abord il n'y a que la volupté de vivre et qui s'éveille à l'esprit de sacrifice et de soumission." (Barrès 1904: 1). L'Eros déchaîné, mais sans issue ni satisfaction, est vaincu à la fin de ce roman étrange. Cette quête inassouvie de l'Eros constitue une des figures du Mal noaillien qui n'a jamais cessé de hanter l'imaginaire et tourmenter l'âme de l'écrivain.

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## The Impossibility of Being

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FRAGATA CORREIA

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Since we know each other as a part of the Universe, we have always tried to adapt ourselves to the world we belong to. Life appears to us as something "not yet done", something to be built, carefully, step by step, as if we were afraid of loosing our first smile, our first word, our main reason of being here! And what kind of reason should this be? To live, to make of this living an expression of our thoughts and, with them, begin a trip inside us and around the world. The perception of ourselves and what surrounds us becomes our existence, something very difficult to deal with and to make the best of. We can understand it, we can even try to turn our daily life into a paradise but, most of the time, the inability to accomplish it prevails. Then begins a fight between this existence turned into a problem and our wish to overcome it. And, although this one might force us to go ahead, touch the limit and be a part of it, the pressure is so high that our gesture seems to disappear, like a cloud in the sky or a step on the sand! Even the words turned into sentences seem to judge us! However, we keep their company and, with them, we begin a long and existential trip where we express our thoughts and fly with our imagination. This capacity develops our "ego", makes possible a subjective interpretation of the world. Unfortunately, a barrier arises and with it the feeling of misunderstanding that keeps us far away from being accepted in this world we were supposed to be a part of, and also very far away from the proper answers to our questions about identity. So, what shall we do? We can judge the identity of the "other", but, surely, we'll be, on the other hand, the object of a



similar judgement. Are we prepared for it? Will the words used to describe our image be the expected ones? Generally they aren't. Our self-esteem is touched and we hide ourselves in some kind of a shell, which only a key will open — ours, the one we keep inside us! Guardians of ourselves, and inside our shells, we go on trying to describe and analyse, in detail, the outside of the building we have claimed as ours. And this analysis is, for moments, the only way out of that shell and the only meaning for being alive. A moment arrives where words are a cry to the world, a vital force, a challenge to the identity of each of us.

This happened with many writers who used their works as a liberation. Remembering Franz Kafka who described the book as “an ax to break up the frozen sea within us”, Fernando Pessoa and Samuel Beckett, among so many others, were not able to break it. They contemplated the world in a depressing way, rubbing all the possibilities of adaptation from their minds... They were insecure about their true “self” and their lives were an endless search, almost always frustrated by the “lost identity”. As Fernando Pessoa used to say:

All of us alive spend  
One life in living it  
Another thinking it,  
And the only life we have  
Is split between  
The true one and the false.

(Honig 1988; 35)

And he, who was a prey of an internal division, made impossible the communication with himself and, by return, the communication with other people. Being was for all of them only possible through negativity and the following words of Beckett's *Worstward Ho* confirm that:

A place. Wherenone. A time when try see. Try say.  
How small. How vast. How if not boundless  
bounded... No. No place but the one. None but the  
one where none. Whence never once in. Somehow in.  
Beyondless... (Beckett 1983: 10)

We can see how he pushed the negation to its limit and cultivated interiority by rejecting the body and the senses. This makes us think that both Pessoa and Beckett were living behind themselves, as if they could be separated from their bodies and live other lives without facing the real one, as if they were, always, asking "Who are we? What is the nature of ourselves? What does a human being mean when he says *I*?" As Valéry remarked also in his *Cahiers*:

il y a un imbécile en moi et il faut que je profite de ses fautes. Dehors il faut que je les masque, les excuse. Mais dedans je ne les nie pas, j'essaye de les utiliser. C'est une éternelle bataille contre les lacunes, les oublis, les dispersions, les coups de vent. Mais qui est moi, s'ils ne sont pas moi? (Valéry 1973: 49)

A fight within himself, perhaps not so acute and painful as it happened with Pessoa, but no doubt that both of them let anguish prevail upon their minds and the labyrinth they created, their infinite search for their own "beings" filled their works with perplexity.

With more or less intensity, those were the literary minds in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time characterized by a terrible search for sense in all kinds of science. It was this spirit of «disquiet» that awoke and challenged them to face the real world and fight against the eternal "nothing", the unchangeable nature of life. *Waiting for Godot* by Beckett is a real proof of what we've just said. The situation created by the author is unchangeable — nothing happens, nobody arrives, no one goes away! A mystery of time where "waiting" is the real meeting with it. Where others see lack of sense, Beckett saw the true presentation of everyday life. He approached the limit of language with its negativity and was able to confirm how limited our being is and also the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this part to existence for the first time. It turns not only into a language, but also into a representation of all the feelings that keep us in contact with this world. The approach to the limit of Beckett's language seems for us to have much in common with the experience of finitude. His deconstruction of the text has a terrible power over us, his tormented prose has such a density and complexity that, when we

come to realize this, language has already taken hold of us. The following description by Foucault can be seen as a definition of Beckett's work: "our efforts are undoubtedly better spent in trying to speak of this experience and in making it speak from the depths where its language fails, from precisely the place where words escape it, where the subject who speaks has just vanished." (Foucault 1977)

To catch the essence of being, Beckett tried to capture the essence of the stream of consciousness and presented us a portrayal of a possible state of consciousness that brought with it the idea of endless ending, of eternal waiting. We become Beckett's real actors, dancing on the stage, showing human nature and its lack of communication, its impossibility of filling the time between birth and death. In *L'innommable*, we face a group of words without a place or starting point, reflecting only a consciousness without a place or starting point. Everything, life included, that can be expressed through language, must be completely rubbed off. Identity is not valued, there's no personality alive, there's silence and, as he said, "I don't know, I'll never know, in silence we don't know, we must go on, I'll go on". A personal problem, Beckett's problem, Kafka's, Valéry's, Pessoa's problem too. They could hear things and see things where others were deaf or blind. Their deconstruction and fear seemed to epitomize both the madness of the modern world and their own desperate neurosis. They exceeded their thoughts and lost references in constructing their inner landscape. Diving into chaos was quite easy, getting out quite difficult. Kafka and Pessoa are a proof of this and their works represent all the excesses and losses and are a perfect study of themselves and the world surrounding them. They wrote as if they wanted to show us the impossibilities that turn to nothing our desires. They lived in pain and anguish and only deep inside they were able to speak with to the world. This interiority acts in a place where other universes can be built and Pessoa let them be a great part of him, giving, by return, birth to an heteronimical life which kept him from madness. In such a place, Pessoa felt himself as a poet and went there and came out so many times as he wanted. Away from those universes, his being was condemned to the impossibility of affirming himself. The infinity



of thoughts converging on him and his incapacity to face them all were his means to create other beings, who were able to be, at the same time, everything and nothing! Alberto Caeiro, Álvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis and Bernardo Soares, among so many others, were the most important and the most evident in undermining and criticizing each other's points of view. Caeiro was the master of poets, bucolic, pure, free; Campos, his disciple, an engineer, connected with the material world; Reis disciplined, formal and a perfectionist; Soares a solitary clerk, lonely, isolated, bored and depressed. And Pessoa, who was he near them? Little more than the location of their fight in language. His constant crisis with himself, his heteronymic creation, circling painfully around the philosophic anxiety of the "self", opened many doors and closed about as many again. It was very difficult for him to feel comfortable in the mind of someone he had just created. He was all in one, none of them was his true self! The heteronyms were the foundation of Pessoa's world and were his true friends. They seemed as real as their ages and lives! They were the possibility for the impossibility of his being and although independent of him, in their company he could write, all over again. With his pen he filled thousands of sheets of paper, most of them unfinished. Fragments that were his life, his reality and the only one he could not escape. His *Book of Disquiet* is as fragmentary as Pessoa considered his heteronym Soares to be the mutilation of his own personality! It was very difficult to live in such a diversity and confusion around and inside him! Did he know where was his true self? Was it so far away from himself or was it himself and a pain so difficult to bear that he preferred to look for other "selves" in other minds of that time?

If we think, as Freud did, that the true self is not an entity inside the mind, hidden by the mask of a false self, but the full person we become when cultural and social interferences are eliminated, we can foresee, even come to the conclusion, that the impossible took care of him. We know that our personality can change, very deeply, when trying to overcome many of the cultural and social limits. As for writers like Pessoa, Kafka and Beckett, they only tried but never managed to do that! The stage of their lives was full of puppets moved by, no matter who... To change this was so

difficult that they ended by looking for protection in words that have the power to make us feel superior as we can step on them, force them to have the place we want and change them according to our will! However, was that enough for them? Did this help their mind? Wasn't it true that they went on facing this life as an illusion, a lie?! Why the feeling of emptiness? Why was it so difficult to bear? Beckett used to say "every time we want to make words do a real job of transference, every time we want to make them express something other than words, they align themselves in such a way as to cancel each other out. This, no doubt, is what gives life so much charm. Because it is by no means a matter of awareness, but of vision, of simply seeing. Simply!"

Is there any delight that binds anyone to this world? No, simply waiting: Beckett's waiting for a meaning in this world, Kafka's waiting for an understanding as an individual full of fears inside his spirit, Pessoa's waiting for a new "wisdom", a new opening to life! The more they invented their lives, the more they enjoyed, the more painful were their lives. And this pain was not a sensation but the true impossibility to face the other. Pessoa lived and felt all his heteronyms, Kafka the incoherence and «depersonalization» of his life, Beckett his negativity and loneliness. Of course all of them lived in a changing, hostile and painful atmosphere — Kafka and Pessoa witnessed the atrocities of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and Beckett those of the 2<sup>nd</sup> one — and they saw themselves surrounded by impossibilities. The simple fact of being alive, meeting other human beings, living with them and talking to them was already a big problem, and not a very easy one to solve! Past and future were a great pressure in the present and their words seemed to have the magic of bringing to life three states of mind — understanding, facing the other and facing themselves. Every time they the limit of experience, couldn't that be their representation of the uselessness of the human being, of man and his feelings? Or, to the contrary, was it a game which they played as beings to exist for a moment, where they gave word to masks carved by the real light or where they dramatized the difficulty of communication in themselves and the pressure of a world of cataclysm where survivors seldom wonder?!

A very problematic game, indeed, and despite their consciousness of the instability of life, they tried to find a quiet and peaceful harbour, to avoid being swallowed up by the routine of materialistic life. To avoid all this, Pessoa went beyond his limits and spoke with the Absolute, his harbour, his place of peace. The sea, grandious and always in movement, a symbol of the Absolute led him beyond all his possibilities and called him to its immensity. There, he built a private world of sorrow, as Kafka did inside four walls, as Beckett did on a minimalistic stage where thoughts and memories run at the speed of time! And they crossed boundaries through imagination and improvisation, they questioned everything and everybody and acted as if they knew the sufferings of this world. As beings in this world but living in different cultures, they appeared to have drunk the same glass of the paradox and the impossible. Purpose, meaning, creativity, spirit could be things to make them feel alive, but because their social systems taught them to be normal, to conform to rules without asking why, this all separated them from authenticity and life did not work, did not make any sense at all to them. Everything seemed to deny, to fragment the system they have tried to be part of. They needed to value the differences, to understand them, in order to produce holistic results that would benefit both mankind and nature. However, their society was a different reality where winners and losers isolated themselves from each other and fragmented, even destroyed, the possibilities to feel alive, to feel like «beings»! Their search for meaning was a long and frustrating journey, full of fear of being wrong, of making a mistake, of being unprepared, of failure, of old age, sickness and death. So many fears, so many uncertainties, made them unable of doing what was reasonable. And from this to the feeling of failure was only a small step!

We know that human beings fail because they do not trust their ability to finish something according to their projects, and this makes their «ego» believe they would look ridiculous or unprepared. But, we also know that we cannot run away from life's experiences and problems must be solved by us, as members of society and with a voice to be heard! Being alone in a room with only one's thoughts and memories is the experience of millions of people and Beckett, Kafka and Pessoa were in their time three



among those who tasted the sourness of loneliness. Agitated by emotions a hundred times more painful than those they have tried to make us feel, unable to solve what reality obliged them to face, their words attempted to explore the infinite and the eternal from the labyrinths of their own solitude. The expression of their thoughts reflected an unfinished dialogue between their «self» and the world, that «kingdom of shades», as Kafka used to say, where writing was a refuge where they could survive, not only as writers, but also as men. Society offered, in their time, a certain civilized unease and to question everybody and everything was a sign of trying to understand the system that was able to dominate man with its mechanisms and the images he created inside him. The system seemed, however, to complicate their efforts and, instead of making them feel like persons, willing to speak, hear and seek the truth about themselves and society it pushed them to melancholy, sadness and emptiness. Three states that turned them into prisoners, looking for a liberty they did not know what it was! In Kafka's work *The Castle* his hero was a prisoner in his land, smashed by it and frightened by melancholy, impotence and sickness and, when asked what he really wanted, he was not able to answer, as the experience of freedom was unknown to him. This hero is Kafka's own image, a man who believed in freedom of which he had no idea at all as he lived in a world of slavery and whose belief forced him to create a terrible world, necessary to the prosecution of the daily life.

Impatient souls, pushed and pulled by uncertainty, go on seeking to express their desires in a familiar and strange world, where, as Beckett would say, everything and nothing exists, where understanding is enigmatic. A play with contraries which confuses our mind and thought, takes hold of our beings must be seen as a projection in all the words said or written, as explorers of both good or evil, but above all, of truth, even if it takes a lifetime to be able to do so. The challenge is there and our writers have accepted it. If they wanted to retain something of themselves, something alive and then define it, well, this something had already vanished from their mind, without control, without a trace. There was no connection between the conscious «self» and the flowing «self»,

but an horizon as far as the eye could see. As Fernando Pessoa said:

Between sleep and dream  
Between me and my mind  
Is what I think I am  
Flows a river without end.  
(Lisboa 1995: 43)

An end that words are able to keep and fancy, now that for him

The poet is a fake  
His faking seems so real  
That he will fake the ache  
Which he can really feel.  
(Ib. 42)

It is an easy task for the poet to dissimulate what he really wanted to express, but very difficult to render the prompt sincerity of the common man. Pessoa seemed to be away from himself, to be able to consider himself as a separate identity. He perceived a very deep self what he called the «soul» but he questioned his difficulty, what he saw even as an impossibility of knowing what he felt. Should he have said or written everything he wanted or should he have dissimulated a world that, to be sure, was not much truer than the real one? Reality hurt him and it was easier to imagine it, even with the risk of not finding himself. His world was based on chance, and like Beckett's Godot, without time, without meaning, without a possibility of being.

Three cries of agony, three men tired of the world whose words tried to go in quest of the whole and embraced nothing. However, this nothing was the totality of the world they belonged to and where they were not able to reach a safe harbour.

If we look at ourselves, members of a society that surprises us everyday, surely we can look up to them, feel their negativity and understand that their words may, even today, be a great challenge to us. We build and destroy, we win and loose, we are owners of labyrinths, of oppressed presents and uncertain futures, we fight to understand each other's problems, but we are still very far from solving them and even our own. And if, for moments, solitude is

precious, it cannot be an eternal blessing for someone who wants to turn this life into a world of light! Let us fill the present moment with light and with it find the right way to accomplish our desires. If words are so strong, may our fingers and our voice have the necessary strength to be a cry and an open door into this world. And may also these two poems from Armando Taborda, a Portuguese poet and a very dear friend of ours, be the voice of the silence of our thoughts:

Because I have a bird inside me  
 I'm free  
 Because I have a skin outside me  
 I'm a hostage  
 (Taborda 1994: 79)

To begin  
 without waste of time  
 looking for  
 a place  
 where to stay  
 not forgetting that to live  
 is to  
 die  
 and certainly  
 the uncertain  
 is the most concrete  
 harbour  
 to board  
 (Taborda 1996: 78)

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# 2000

The ESTONIAN LITERARY MAGAZINE, a collaboration of the Estonian Institute and the Estonian Writers' Union, is a twice-yearly publication in the English language, founded in 1995. Its aim is to introduce the past and present of Estonian literature. It publishes regular overviews of new literary works in Estonia.

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